NORTH TO YESTERDAY

by

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LAMPASSAS reined up his rat-tailed, jug-headed, cow-hocked pinto horse on the little rise beside the lone, gnarled mesquite which had not yet admitted the end of winter. He brushed back the upturned brim of his full-crowned, still vaguely white hat, and grabbing the ends of the blue bandana tied about his neck, wiped the sweat from his forehead. Lampassas was a little man, wrinkled, dried up, and soured, and even on his horse he looked old and frail. But Lampassas did not feel old and frail. He felt like a young man full of destiny. He was swollen with dreams. Big with fulfillment. The horse lifted him above the earth; carried him swiftly and powerfully to his goal.

Lampassas stood up in the stirrups to stretch his legs and looked back. Behind him, across the valley, green with the first spring rains, the Preacher led out with the wagon. And behind the wagon were June and Pretty Shadow on the point. And behind them was a string of cows, their long horns tossing in the sunlight, as far as the eye could see. Behind the last cow and the men in the drag, beyond the cloud of dust that followed the herd, was a gray country store, smelling of hams, and pickles, new leather, and sour beer, dusty shelves packed with air-tights of peaches, apricots, and plums. Out back, through the bedroom and kitchen behind the store, and the weedy yard where larkspurs once had bloomed, beneath a live-oak tree, on land which now belonged to a stranger, was a single grave.

For Lampassas, this moment had been a long time coming. Hitching his leg up over the saddle, he sat back to savor it.

Lampassas had fought with the Confederacy in the West and had come back from the war without having really been away, having lost the war without ever losing a battle. He came back like the others; with nothing, to nothing, wanting nothing. Everything had been finished, or put aside and forgotten, so that now there was nothing to do. So that until something got started, he would drift, crossing and recrossing through country he was already familiar with, working a little and waiting.

Lampassas got a job chasing wild cattle out of the brush where they were hiding, and rounding them up for a big drive up north where they were worth more than a dollar and six bits for the hide. When a sizable herd had been rounded up, the men were separated into two crews; one crew to drive the herd to Baxter Springs, and

one crew to have another herd rounded up, cut, and branded by the time the first crew got back. Lampassas was left behind hunting cows. He didn't mind. He didn't have anywhere to go anyway. He was waiting.

When the drovers returned, they told tales not of Baxter Springs but of another town. Abilene. They told of getting up with the meadowlarks and going to bed with the whippoorwill; of going to sleep to the wail of the coyote and the song of the night herders. They talked of the loneliness, stampedes, river crossings, and dry drives of the trail; and of the fancy dealing, cheap whisky, and cheaper women at the end of the trail. Lampassas decided to go see for himself, but by the following spring he was too valuable a brush popper to go up the trail. For the next three years the outfit turned to rounding up the cattle and letting others drive them to the railhead. But Lampassas was determined to go up the trail himself. The next drive, the big one, the one he would remember all his life, to Wichita this time, he was to have been secundo, assistant to the trail boss. But that was the year he went to the Christmas Ball at the general store and met the storekeeper's plain-faced daughter, Marfa.

People had come to the Christmas Ball from fifty miles around, about four men to every girl, woman, and grandmother, but Lampassas didn't mind the competition. He hadn't come to dance anyway. He sat and watched the cowboys standing in line, maneuvering to get the young women when their turn came. He watched the girls whirling around the room, smiling. He tapped his foot to the music of the fiddle. He was already over thirty years old, and shy as a bridled mustang. But Marfa handled that.

"You haven't danced one dance, and neither have I, so let's dance this one together."

Lampassas danced the way he sheared sheep, not at all. But Marfa pulled him onto the dance floor. "I'm not afraid if you're not," she said, and they stomped their feet until the music stopped.

"Excuse me, ma'am, I've got to get out of here," Lampassas said when the music stopped. His face had darkened to the roots of his hair, and his stiff collar was choking him.

Marfa picked up her shawl and followed him outside. "I won't ask you to do that again," she said.

"I'm obliged."

They walked around to the back of the store and sat down on the steps of the porch.

Marfa wasn't a real plain-looking woman. Her skin was smooth, her forehead broad, her nose fine and not rough. Her eyes were gray but not plain. Her mouth was rather straight, but when she smiled she wasn't plain at all but warm and friendly. But some men didn't like the way she set her mouth when she said something. The way she talked made her plain. She was a real plain-talking woman.

"How many days do you have off?"

"I get four every year, but generally I save one or two days for the Fourth of July."

"A man your age ought to have something better to do than get drunk on the Fourth of July."

Lampassas blushed and ducked his head. "I reckon I do," he said.

"I'm going to bed," she said, and standing up, she crossed the porch and entered the room on the west wide. Lampassas followed her and took off his hat to say goodnight, but she closed the door in his face. Throwing the hat down on the porch, Lampassas kicked it out in the yard.

As was his habit, Lampassas awoke at dawn, stood up, and stretched. The sore-fingered fiddlers finished the last dance. The sore-footed cowboys sat down to rest. The women went into the kitchen to fix breakfast. When the women returned with platters of fried steaks, flapjacks with molasses, biscuits, and pots of coffee, Marfa was with them. She filled Lampassas's plate, and after all the men were served, she fixed a plate for herself. Lampassas carefully placed his hands on her thin waist, boosted her up on the counter, and sat down beside her, where they ate in silence.

After breakfast Lampassas walked Marfa up and down the road, back and forth through town, that day and every day until Lampassas had to go back to the ranch. At night they sat on the front or back porch of the store, whichever was out of the wind, and they talked while Marfa's father thumped around inside and grunted about people who came to the store and didn't buy anything.

The last night before riding back to the ranch, Lampassas took Marfa's hand, kissed her on the cheek, and promised her he'd try to see her before he left on the drive that spring.

"I've seen men go up the trail and come back so diseased up they couldn't never marry a decent woman," Marfa said.

Lampassas promised her he wouldn't come back like that.

"I've seen men come back never satisfied to settle down and build something, but always hankering to be off again for the city, drinking and playing cards," she said.

Lampassas promised her he wouldn't come back like that either.

"Seems to me if a man could do without whisky, and if he was thinking to marry, there wouldn't be any need in him going up the trail at all."

Lampassas backed out of going up the trail, and after the spring roundup, he took a day off to marry Marfa. He found a preacher who was taking a herd of cattle to Caldwell and brought him to town to perform the ceremony. Lampassas moved his wife out to the line-rider's dugout. It was just a hole in the side of an embankment, but it had a wooden door, and a wagon sheet over the earthen roof that kept some of the dirt and water and most of the snakes and centipedes from coming through. Lampassas was proud of it, and Marfa didn't complain.

Lampassas wanted to make the drive the following year. "I don't think a man should go off and leave a woman to have a baby by herself," Marfa said. Lampassas didn't go. He worked the roundup. He rode to Squaw Creek and back looking for signs of drifting cattle. "I don't think I'd better stay here any longer with you gone off two or three days at a time," Marfa said. Lampassas borrowed the wagon and moved her into the little room in the back of the store where she had grown up.

Lampassas was driving cattle from dried-up Squaw Creek to Huacho Tanks, where there was still water, when the baby was born. A boy. Five days old when Lampassas first saw him, small, sickly, gasping for breath. "He's been like that since he was born," Marfa said. "Can't get his breath. He won't live two days in that dugout." Lampassas drew his pay, put the rest of their belongings on his horse, and moved into the back of the store, where he, Marfa, and the baby, Jamie, lived in a bedroom on one side of the porch, and Marfa's father lived on the other, with the kitchen between them. Because he lived in the settlement, in the back of a store, people stopped calling him Lampassas and he became plain Marvin Darsey.

Marvin Darsey worked a few weeks during the roundups each year, and the rest of the time he sat around the store listening to

Marfa's father tell how Sam Houston had ruined the country, and how the Baptists were sending everybody to hell. Most folks just traded with him for spite, and because it was fifteen miles to the store over at Wall Town. Lampassas never said anything to the old man. He listened, carried groceries, and drove the wagon for supplies.

After the old man died, Marvin stopped working the roundups and tended the store. There wasn't much to it. Every month or so the ranches would send around a hand with a wagon and a list of supplies. Lampassas would fill it as best he could, making whatever substitutions he felt suitable. When they asked for cough syrup he substituted whisky; for tonic, sulphur and molasses; for perfume, vanilla flavoring; and when a new wife asked for a large china urn, he sent a crock chamber pot.

When one of the ranches sent for supplies, Marvin and the hand would load the wagon, and then Marvin would sit on the porch and chew while the hand ate an air-tight of peaches and talked about the grass, and the number of cows branded, and that hammer-head horse that had run him through the corral and busted him up to where he was driving a wagon.

When a cowboy came through, down on his luck, having lost all his money in the gaming halls or the little huts along the railroad tracks at the end of the trail, Marvin would give him cheese and crackers and listen while the man dreamed of one more chance to make one more drive to get enough money ahead to start a brand of his own.

But the men in shiny black boots and brushed black suits, who came in to drink whisky and to buy flour by the hundred-pound sack, who paid cash for two months' supply of food for six hands, were the men who had taken their own cows up the trail and had brought the money back to buy up land and to stock their ranges. Marvin sat on the porch watching the huisache fade into darkness and listening to them talk, while his wife watered the flowers in the back yard and his son scratched the alphabet on a slate.

As he listened, Marvin began to see the trail. Along the Arroyo Hondo where the grass is good, until you are out of the brush, swing left of Jackson Springs, pass through Lost Valley, over Buffalo Branch, along Calf Creek through the Blanco Mountains, across the salt flats, Seven Lakes, Decision Valley, Nine Mile Creek, west of Mustang Springs, north of Tenderloin, the left fork of Hell Creek.

Rest the herd in Dead Man's Valley. There's always running water in Osage Creek. The prairie dogs are bad around Seven Lakes. One herd lost three steers to a pack of lobos on the salt flats.

He saw the rivers across the trail: the Brazos, the Canadian, the Red, the Washita, the Cimarron, the Arkansas; rivers to be crossed —forded or swum as the case might be—and on the other side he saw the bright and gleaming city set on a hill, Trails End, the fortune and reward for the sweat and risk of the trail.

Marvin listened long after the men had left him sitting on the porch alone, hearing sounds he thought he had forgotten: the contented grunting of well-fed and watered cows bedding down at night, the snuffing of an angry steer, the bawling of a lost calf, the deep-throated grunts of a bronc trying to throw its rider, the satisfying creak and jingle and clop of riding alone. Marvin would go into the store, put out the lamp, and find his way to bed in the dark, not needing a light. Lying in bed sleepless and alone, he would go over the trail, calling off the towns, the rivers, the landmarks, recalling where the grass was good, the water clear, the bedgrounds safe.

One morning Marfa didn't get up to water the flowers. Marvin went in to see about her. "I'm all right," she said. "It's just a fever. I'll be all right tomorrow." She was one of thirteen people who were carried away in the epidemic. Marvin rode over to Wall Town to get the Baptist preacher, and they buried her beneath a live-oak tree back of the store.

Marvin took the frightened boy to his room and gave him an airtight of peaches for supper. The boy sat in the rawhide chair in his best clothes, eating the peaches from the can. Marvin sat on the bed watching him. He could think of nothing to say. Outside it was growing dark. The black satin bow he had hung at the front of the store could be heard fluttering in the wind, rustling against the door. Marvin listened for a while, and then he went out on the porch to lean against the side of the house and thoughtfully chew his tobacco. He thought of Marfa. He thought of the boy, the store, the trail. And when morning came, Marvin had decided to wait until Jamie could go with him. When Jamie was ready, the trail would be also. They would go up the trail together.

Marvin tried to take over his son's education, but Jamie was a puzzle to him. Marvin couldn't teach him reading and writing, and the boy was already keeping books for the store, so Marvin decided

to teach him what he knew. How to judge a horse by his teeth, back, and legs. How to keep a tally book on brands and ear marks. How to ride a high roller or a sunfisher. How to treat a setfast. How to throw a Blocker loop, heel catch, horn catch, over the hump to catch both front feet on the off side and throw a big steer without stepping out of the saddle. He set up a saddle on a sawhorse and gave Jamie a lariat to play with, but Jamie didn't play with it.

Some surveyors came through laying out a track to El Paso. They were around for a while, coming by the store every two or three days to sit on the porch and drink beer. Marvin and Jamie sat on the porch and listened to them talk of paddies who could lay ten miles of track a day and brawl all night about who drove the last spike. Of highballs, air brakes, boudoir cars, double-headers, moguls, and spark-arrester caps. Of shacks, brass pounders, tallow pots, and hog heads. Of gandy dancers. Of flange bolts. Of stringers, spanners, side plates and spike mauls. Marvin wished they would leave so he could go to bed and map out the trail again, but Jamie listened to the new and singing words and dreamed of the railroad as Kansas boys dreamed of river boats. Jamie was polite, asked questions about the railroad, brought them beer when they asked for it; and when they left, they gave him a railroad book and an engineer's cap. Jamie read the book, but he put the cap under his pillow because Marvin didn't like for him to wear it.

Marvin didn't approve of Jamie's interest in the railroad, which he considered to be the ruin of the country. When cow men came to the store, Lampassas would get Jamie and sit him close by so he could hear them talk of the long trail and the adventures and hardships along the way. But he could tell the boy was not listening. Jamie's eyes were fixed on a faraway dream, his ears heard a distant rumbling and roaring in the earth, his mind was set on change.

The railroad was rapidly building along the route laid out by the surveyors, and one of their buyers stopped by to arrange a base of supplies. "You and me ought to be able to work out a little deal which is mutually advantageous," the buyer said, putting his arm around Lampassas's shoulder and giving him a wink. "Economics being what they are."

Marvin didn't know what economics were, but he sold out to the surprised buyer, keeping only enough things to equip himself and his son for the trail.

Free of the store after almost twenty years, Lampassas and his son rode off to buy a herd and find some hands to drive it. Lampassas rode back to the Treefork ranch where he had worked as a young man. He was surprised to see the fences, the windmills that stood in the pasture like trees, the new white house that replaced the old adobe. "I hope they still got cows," he said to Jamie.

"This is a horse ranch now," Fulton said. "Race horses."

"I heard you'd changed things around since old man Naylor died, but I never thought you'd rid the place of all them cows."

"Well, I ain't exactly rid it," Fulton said, giving a thoughtful pull to the crotch of his trousers. "There's still lots of them old longhorns back in the brush. My boys don't seem to be able to get them out of there."

"I'll take them," Lampassas said.

Fulton, who had been trying to shoot the cows to get rid of them, was pleased to discover that no matter how worthless something was, there was always someone who would pay cash for it. Working Lampassas until he found the size of his pocketbook, Fulton agreed to sell every cow Lampassas could find and hold long enough to brand, plus a broken-down wagon and fifty horses he had culled out of his own caviard, for whatever Lampassas had. Then he had to loan Lampassas five hundred dollars to outfit the wagon so Lampassas could move the herd off his ranch. Lampassas promised to pay the five hundred at the end of the drive.

Lampassas considered it a sign of good luck that he found a herd so easily, and an even better sign when the first hand approached him looking for a job the next day. He and Jamie were riding out to look for the longhorns when a man driving a hayrake pulled up his mules and waved them to stop.

"There's talk you're going up the long trail," the man said. "If so, I'd like to go with you."

"Have you ever worked with cows?"

"Most of my life. I'm a little down on my luck right now," the man said, indicating the team of mules and the hayrake. "But I'd sure like to get back in the saddle, and I'd particularly like to get back to Trails End."

"What do they call you?"

"When I was riding the long trail, they called me Pretty Shadow."

"I'll advance you the money to outfit yourself with a suit of

clothes and a good saddle against the end of the trail," Lampassas said.

Lampassas took Pretty Shadow back to the store and let him select the clothes he wanted. Pretty Shadow looked around the store, pulled out the items he wanted, and dropped them in a pile on the floor.

The horse pawed impatiently beneath him. Lampassas shifted in the saddle and took one last backward look at the life behind him, seeing instead the Preacher lustily singing revival hymns as he drove the wagon, Pretty Shadow and June on the point, and behind them, the herd. Turning, Lampassas looked ahead, beyond the rolling hills where blackjack oaks were beginning to green, past the morning clouds of the horizon, through the bluebonnet, Indian Blanket prairie, the gray-green chaparall, across the rippling red of the river, where Trails End, the Golden City of the West, was shining in the sunlight.

Lampassas knew the way, not as a traveler knows the way by map and waybill, not as an explorer knows the way by compass and guide, but in a more certain and rudimentary way, as a bird knows the way across the sky to its winter home, as a fish finds a path through the sea to the river's mouth, or as the elephant goes home to die.

With his hat, Lampassas motioned the point to follow him, then spurred his horse down off the rise, riding majestically through the wet grass, down the trail that opened before him. Behind him the herd was beginning that sudden and complete dissolution known as the stampede.

The Preacher, being the camp cook, was not required to chase after the stampeding cattle, and since the wagon had remained in the same place so the men could find it, he had spent the day greasing the running gear, mending the harness, killing a beef that had been crippled in the stampede, and fixing something special for the boys to eat.

The Preacher was an old man, as old as Lampassas, with short, thin legs, thick chest, and large head. His hair and beard were uncombed and his face was lined and drawn with the long days and hard work of the trail. But he was a patient man, having waited on the Lord a long time; he expected to live by the sweat of his brow, and he asked only that tomorrow's campfire be closer to Trails End

than today's. When the team was hitched and the wagon was on the move, he sang; when the brake was set, the tongue pointed north, and the lid of the chuck box dropped, he worked; when the herd was bedded and the fire banked, he prayed; and when he got to Trails End, he would preach. It was the Lord's way.

Jamie—the Kid—was dreaming of a giant locomotive which was pounding across the trembling earth on rails of steel, throwing clouds of black smoke into the air, its bell clanging. With his gloved hand securely on the throttle, his cap pulled down firmly, his neckerchief culttering in the breeze, he watched out the window, his narrowed eyes fixed on the widening tracks. Up ahead he saw the signal light slanting down the rails. "Green on the semaphore," he shouted to the fireman, who echoed back the call as he swung a shovelful of coal into the firebox. "Green on the semaphore."

Slim and Quill, who were taking the first watch, rode down wind of the wagon and quickly stripped the saddles and bridles from their horses. The Kid turned the tired horses into the remuda, and while Slim and Quill ate he caught up two fresh mounts for them, having them saddled and ready by the time the men had finished eating.

Slim and Quill rode back to begin the night herding, and the rest of the hands came in to eat and rest before taking their turn with the herd. They unsaddled and let their sweaty horses roll before running them in with the rest of the remuda, then spread their ropes and helped the Kid catch the night horses. Due to the poor condition of the horses, Lampassas directed that they be staked close to the wagon, but left unsaddled.

Lampassas led the way to the wagon. Dropping his saddle and leggings by the fire, he asked about Slim and Quill. The Preacher, who had seen several men ride off from the wagon and never come back, replied that they had eaten well but had seemed down in the mouth to him. Too tired to face up to any more desertions, Lampassas washed his face and hands at the wagon, ran the comb through his tough gray hair, and handing it to the next man in line, picked up a tin plate and helped himself to the chuck. Hitching up the dusty, baggy trousers which had once been uncomfortably tight, he sat down cross-legged beside his saddle to eat.

Gattis, a red-faced, red-headed Georgia farm boy, dropped his saddle, his batwing chaps, his ornate Chihuahua spurs, pushed back the huge, white sombrero, which was decorated with a band made

from the hide of a diamondback rattler, and which added a foot to his stature, and sat down to pull off the high-heeled, pointed-toe boots. Gattis's feet were not made for boots. They were big Georgia feet, the soles flat, the toes splayed, the nails thick and yellow; feet made for walking the warm, moist Georgia furrows behind the heaving haunches of a mule.

Pretty Shadow neatly divided his long hair down the middle, raked it down the side and with a flip of his wrist, tossed it back. He had spent more than half of his thirty-five years around cow camps and cow towns and was no longer the tall, straight, carefree boy who first went up the trail. The years had softened his shadow, hardened his face. He had a bum knee from a fall with his horse, a stiff, knocked-down shoulder from a tangle with a bogged cow, and a dent in his nose caused by a reluctant steer. Bad food, bad water, and bad women had left other marks less visible but just as crippling.

June, who followed Pretty Shadow and Gattis to the washpan, showed little interest in appearances. Dropping his hat in the wagon, he dipped water at his face with one hand and reached for the towel with the other. After drying his face, June took the comb, brushed the straight black hair out of his eyes, and set his hat back on his head. Dropping one hand to the butt of his six-shooter, June turned to survey the night through his small, close-set eyes, his crooked mouth hanging open. June was not so tall as Pretty Shadow, but he had broad shoulders and strong arms which made him look big, and the small eyes, heavy six-shooter, and scar on his cheek made him look mean and dangerous.

For a while the men ate silently and steadily. Then, having taken the edge off their hunger, they helped themselves to more sourdoughs and stew, or another cup of coffee. Pretty Shadow, an authority on camp cooking, noted that the Preacher was the only man he knew who could get four hundred pounds of biscuits out of a fifty-pound sack of flour.

The Preacher was about to reply when Lampassas dropped his plate in the wreck pan and got his bedroll out of the wagon. The other men followed suit, unrolling their soogans before the fire.

The Kid laid on the ground beside him the new clothes which he planned to wear when they got to Trails End, and kicked the engineer's cap to the foot of his soogans before anyone saw it. The Preacher placed his Bible under his head.

"Pretty Shadow, does chasing these cows make sense to you?" the Kid asked.

"Like the Preacher says, I got a job and when it's done I'll be in Trails End, and I got a gal there waiting for me. Been waiting for fifteen years. Hell, if I was to wait much longer, I reckon it wouldn't be no use to go stall."

"The Lord told me to go to Nineveh and build a church there," the Preacher said. "That's why I'm going. I don't reckon He cares if I take a few cows with me."

"If this herd is going to Nineveh, I sure as hell ain't going with it," said Pretty Shadow. "I ain't got no gal in Nineveh."

"It's Trails End that I am talking about," the Preacher said.

"Then why the hell do you keep calling it Nineveh?"

"Because there ain't no Nineveh no more," the Preacher explained with Christian patience. "That is just a name. The Lord spoke to me and said, 'Go to Nineveh, that great, wicked city, and build my church there,' and I said, "Where, O Lord?" and He said, 'Across the River Red. Across the Arkansas and the Cimarron.' And I knew then he meant Trails End." He looked about him, his eyes full of dream. Everyone was asleep. "June? Kid? Pretty Shadow?" he called.

Pretty Shadow grunted and turned in his sleep, holding tightly to his dream of Diamond Annie. Clad only in her embroidered flannel drawers, with a lacy silver garter on her leg, she was reclining against the red satin bolster of the brass bed. Pretty Shadow himself was sitting on the bed trying to remove his tight boots while Annie ran a brush through her sparkling black hair. Her rosy lips curled back in a smile and she whispered his name. "Pretty Shadow."

"Pretty Shadow," the Preacher called, a little louder this time. "Stompede," he whispered. Pretty Shadow threw off his soogans, grabbed his hat, and jumped to his feet. The night was still, the herd was bedded down, and he could hear Slim singing softly to the cattle.

Pretty Shadow looked about at his companions, all of whom seemed to be asleep except the Preacher, who was droning on about his church. Pretty Shadow stretched, yawned, and lay back down to roll himself a smoke. "Dammit, Preacher, I was dreaming about Diamond Annie," he said.

"Is that one of them cheap women you're always talking about?"

"I don't know whether they was cheap or not," said Pretty

Shadow, thoughtfully blowing smoke at the stars. "But they was sure inexpensive."

"Tell me about them, Pretty Shadow. Tell me about Trails End," the Kid said.

"Why, boy, I thought you was dead to the world."

"It ain't respectful to talk about such things in front of a boy that way," the Preacher said.

"Why, when I was half his age I had already pointed my first herd, emptied my first bottle, and broke half a dozen women. I reckon I was what they call a child prodigal."

"Is that why they call you Pretty Shadow?"

"They call him Pretty Shadow because he rides along admiring his shadow running along the ground beside him," the Preacher said.

"I'll tell you about that, Kid," Pretty Shadow said, throwing his cigarette into the fire. "One night I was on the dodge, and since I couldn't find no other place to go, I ducked into the first window I seen. Worse luck, it was a girl's bedroom, and when she started to scream, there wasn't nothing to do but kiss her to keep her quiet. Well, her pa opened the door and stepped in, and I stopped kissing that girl right there and went out the window a whole lot faster than I came in. 'Who was that in here with you?' I heard him say, like he was intending on going for a shotgun and a preacher. 'I don't know,' she said. 'But he sure had a pretty shadow.' Well, the name just kinda stuck. I have been called Pretty Shadow by girls from Cheyenne to Shawnee."

"God a'mighty, can't you fellers let a man sleep," June said, raising up on one elbow. "We chased them damn critters all day and no sooner than get to sleep before Pretty Shadow starts chasing women."

"He was going to tell me about the bad girls I'll meet at Trails End," the Kid said.

But the Kid could not sleep. "Pretty Shadow, tell me about Trails End," he said again.

"Oh, there's lot to see, Kid, lots to do. Course I ain't been there in fifteen years, but I don't see how it could have improved any."

"What's the first thing you do?"

"The first thing you get to town, you go to the barber shop and take a bath with lots of soap and hot water. Then you get a haircut and a slick shave with lots of sweet-smelling oils and bay rum. Down

the street you'll see this fine store, the New York and Trails End Clothiers, where they got about ever kind of duds a man would wear, and some that a man wouldn't. You get you a new suit of clothes, a good hat, some fancy boots, and you're all set to take a stroll about town.

"Best I remember there's about two dozen saloons, all of which serve the same whisky. What they charge you for is the accessories. Duggan's is the cheapest; they don't have nothing but a bar and some buckets for wetting down the dirt floor. Over at the Bullshead, they got some good lamps, a real floor, and some tables if you want to try your luck at the cards. If you win anything you might want to work your way up to the Red Dog Saloon where they got a carpet on the floor, brass spittoons, and girls. If you see a girl you like, you might dance her around, buy her a drink, and take her upstairs where they got brass beds and painted lamps. Real high class. After that you might want to howl some. Go back to Duggan's, raise a little sand, get drunk, and then if you got any money left you can go down to Texas Street to spend the night.

"There's all kinds on Texas Street. Some of them have windows, and lamps, and floors, and others ain't nothing but a roof and a bed. I've knowed fellers to start at the top and work their way down, and I've knowed fellers that let their payroll be their guide. It don't matter. They got girls to fit ever pocketbook."

The Kid lay blinking up at the stars, trying to imagine dancing a girl about the dance floor, and then steering her masterfully up the stairs and into bed. His imagination failed him.

"You've seen the trains, ain't you?"

"I've seen lots of trains, boy, lots of them. Kid, there's more pretty women riding the trains than there is riding up the long trail. Why, If I weren't on my way to Trails End to get married, I'd sure be tempted to give up this wayward life for riding on a train."

"I aim to work on the railroad," the Kid said. Pretty Shadow only grunted. The Kid raised up on his elbow and looked at his father, small beneath his blanket. Since leaving the store, he seemed to have shrunk, hardened, like a bois d'arc apple. "I'll go with him," he said. "But just because of the train."

The banked fire glowed a dull red, the coffee pot hissed. The Kid lay back and snuggled down into his soogans, finding the engineer's cap and holding it in one hand. He closed his eyes to see the steel

rails that bound together the many faces of the continent. The Prairie Zephyr stood on the rails, immobile, contained, but trembling with power, straining to be free. The Kid pulled his cap down with authority. Catching the chain, he pulled the watch from the pocket of his overalls so that it lay open in his palm. For a moment he studied it, then replaced it, pulled on the heavy gauntlets, looked over the train order sheets and a clearance, and handed them to the fireman. The car inspectors finished their examination of the journal boxes. The head brakeman signaled from the end of the train. The Kid swung up to the cab. His eyes swept over the silver-faced gauges and checked the water glass. He tried the gauge cocks. Down the tracks a green light glimmered.

"Green on the semaphore," the fireman shouted.

"Green on the semaphore," he echoed.

Behind him, the conductor waved the highball. The brakes went off, the bell clanged, there were two shrill blasts of the whistle, a hiss of steam, a throaty cough in the stack, a bump, and the sound of the giant knuckles coupling. The Kid dropped the reverse lever into the fullforward position, and eased back the throttle. There was an explosion in the stack, steam poured into the cylinder driving the piston out, pushing the crosshead between the steel guides; the main rod slid back, the side rods cranked forward, the drivers crunched into the sanded rail. There was another explosion in the stack, driving the piston forward, the side rods cranked back, the cars lurched forward. The stack huffed, the main rod slid back and then forward, the drivers ground into the rails, the engine began its powerful stroke. The exhaust thundered, the cars rolled slowly behind as one. The churning engine increased its stroke, the stack panted and puffed, the cars rolled freely, losing their inertia. The Kid leaned out the window, watching the dull glow of the headlight on the rails.

The Kid crouched over his arm rest, one hand on the throttle, looking over the gauges on the boiler head, glancing down the track as the wind whipped his neckerchief and the smoke billowed above him. Without slackening speed, the engine swung into a curve, stringing out the bumping cars behind it, hurtling free and unstoppable across the earth, and inside the cab the Kid rode high, free of the earth, ringing the bell not in announcement or protest but in joy as he passed through the night and across the prairie.

CHAPTER II

A HERD of longhorn cattle being driven up the trail fifteen years after the trail had been closed and ten years after most folks had decided the longhorn cow had gone the way of the bone man, attracted a lot of attention, all of it unfavorable.

The Brazos County Cattleman and Stockraiser's Association heard the news with dismay. Ten years before anyone else the members of the association had realized the day of the longhorn and the trail drive was over and had started raising cattle that couldn't walk to water but could be eaten without danger to teeth or stomach. They had taught their cowboys how to string wire and repair windmills and had fenced off their ranges to protect their tender stock from the fever-ridden trail herds, the exuberance of longhorn cows, and the malice of drunken cowboys who stubbornly mistook the muley bulls for large sheep.

Time had proven them right and they had ceased being self-conscious about carrying water to the cows and walking the bulls to settle them. And now their investment was threatened by a herd of barbaric cows and a man who didn't understand that the trail had been plowed under, fenced off, and overgrown with towns and farms. A meeting was called in a back pasture, the problem was reviewed and resolutions were considered.

"Worse-looking bunch of cows I ever seen," said one man. "Some of them are fifteen and sixteen years old and so tough you couldn't carve them with a Winchester. Fulton even sold them an old blue bull. They had to castrate him to drive him, but it didn't tame him none. Take my word, there ain't a fence or a bull in the country that's safe from them cows."

A resolution to oppose the herd with saddle guns died for lack of a second. "If I was to show a Winchester to my hands, they'd think it was a new-fangled post-hole digger," said one man.

A resolution to stampede the herd was laughed off, as the cattle had been stampeding two or three times a week steady without any help at all.

A resolution to steal the horses, setting the drovers afoot, a position which was not advantageous to driving cattle, was debated, denounced, deplored, and adopted. "And we see to it that nobody sells them any horses," the president said.

Gattis McCullough was the first to observe the arrival of the Association. Unaccustomed to dust, dry air, and sleeping on the ground, Gattis had been plagued with a dryness of the nose and throat. He wanted to get up and get a drink of water; but his watch was coming soon, and he would have to get up then anyway, so if he could wait until then he could save himself one getting up.

Gattis decided to wait. Rolling over, he was beginning to hear the river again, the river back home that had always lulled him to sleep. He was listening to it sucking softly at the bank when he realized something was wrong. He sat up. Seconds later Lampassas sat up also. Around the campfire, other men lifted their heads, listening for something they had not yet identified, but which had changed the quality of the night.

"Slim has stopped singing," the Preacher whispered.

The men began to move, quietly laying back the covers, putting on their hats and pulling on their boots. June's hand went unerringly to the six-shooter in its holster beside his head. Gattis held one boot poised, ready to stuff his foot into it only if absolutely necessary.

"Something's bothering the horses," Pretty Shadow said.

The remuda, which had been grazing off to the left of the wagon, was now standing motionless. The absence of movement indicated to Pretty Shadow's experienced ears that the horses had scented something and were standing absolutely still, nostrils twitching, ears set forward. The hoofbeats were sudden in the stillness as the horses wheeled about and began trotting off in a single direction, not scattering.

"Somebody's driving off the horses. Rustlers, rustlers," Lampassas yelled, seeing a man riding after the night horses.

Lampassas ran after the night horses, trying to step on the trailing stake ropes in the darkness. The night horses, gentlest in the remuda, were trotting, heads high for fear of stepping on the ropes. Lampassas headed them and turned them back toward the wagon, hoping the other hands could catch them as they ran past.

"Here they come. Get a rope on them," he yelled as Pretty Shadow threw a loop over the head of one of the horses and went running along behind it trying to pull the horse down.

Lampassas caught a stake rope, and the horse, feeling the pressure on the other end of the rope, reared, dragging Lampassas with it. Holding tightly to the rope, Lampassas talked to the horse, trying

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to calm it. Gradually he worked his way along the rope, a hand at a time, trying to get close enough to catch the horse's ear. Someone began shooting close at hand, frightening the horse. The horse backed away, trying to rear. Lampassas held on, throwing his weight against the horse, and then the rope went slack as the horse dropped to its knees and rolled over on its side, shot through the head.

Lampasses stood holding the rope, looking down at the dead horse. At first he thought what he heard was the echo from the gunshots, and then he realized it was the sound of the cattle running. The shots had stampeded the herd. Too exhausted to run for cover, Lampassas sat down beside the dead horse, hoping to hide behind it if the cattle came his way, but they veered away to the north.

Lampassas sat beside the horse until all was quiet, and then he took the stake rope off the horse and walked back to the wagon. Someone had put out the lantern. He lighted it so that the others could find their way back and set it on the chuck-box lid. June was sitting under the wagon, covering him with the six-shooter.

"Put that thing away," Lampassas said, and June put the pistol in the holster and crawled out from under the wagon, dusting his trousers. "June, what was you shooting at?"

"Sounded like someone was trying to steal a horse."

"How do you know it wasn't one of us trying to catch a horse?"

"Never thought of that," June said. "Hope I never shot anybody."

"You shot my horse," Lampassas said with remarkable restraint. "I caught a horse and was fixing to jump on his back when you shot him."

"Ain't it lucky it wasn't you?" June said.

Lampassas sought the words to adequately express his emotions at having his remuda stolen, his herd stampeded, and the one horse he had managed to save shot out from under him. But Lampassas was not an eloquent man, and after several false and blasphemous starts, he sat down beside the wagon.

"Maybe someone else caught a horse," he said hopefully, as the men began straggling in one at a time and sat down beside the fire to examine their wounds. But it soon became evident that the men had been unsuccessful, that all the horses had been driven off—including those which pulled the wagon—that the herd had stampeded, and that Slim and Quill had either joined the rustlers or had ridden for home at the first sign of trouble. Fortunately, none of the men had

been seriously hurt except Gattis, whose foot had been stepped on.

"How are we going to drive them cows afoot?" asked Pretty Shadow, rubbing his bent nose. "Likely them old cows ain't never seen a man afoot before."

"I don't know," Lampassas said. "I don't even know whether or not it can be done. But I know where the trail is, and by God, I'm following it with as much of a herd as I can get behind. I know you boys didn't sign on to go driving cows afoot, but you signed on, and there just ain't nothing else to do till we get some horses. No real cow hand ever deserted a herd, but if there's anybody here that thinks he can't make it to Mustang Springs afoot, he had damn sure better pick up his gear and get away from my wagon."

"Mustang Springs ain't so far to walk if there's horses there," June said, looking mean enough to walk it barefooted.

"I don't know whether there's horses there or not," Lampassas said. "But why else would they call it that? Gattis, if your foot's broke maybe you better ride in the wagon."

"How do you intend to move the wagon?" asked the Preacher.

"The first steers we come to, we'll harness to the wagon."

"We don't have no yokes."

"I reckon it'll be a little rough till we get them broke in," Lampassas admitted.

"Oh, I reckon I can get them started," the Preacher said. "It's convincing them to stop I ain't got worried out."

"I think I'll be able to walk by morning," said Gattis, who viewed walking as safer and at least as comfortable as riding in a wagon the steers were tied to.

June unbuckled the belt and let the pistol fall beside his bed. "I shouldn't a let them get away with the horses," he said. "I feel bad about that. I believe if I hadn't a been scared of shooting one of you fellers, I could a withstood them."

Pointedly, the others ignored him, stretching out again, looking up at the distant, coldly glittering stars. Despite their weariness, they were tense and restless. Without the herd they felt free, but also lost.

The Preacher thanked his Lord that he had been delivered from the dangers of the night, but it did seem to him that losing the horses was an unnecessary trial to a man who was following the Lord's will and a herd of cows to Trails End. And now that he had

tried it, it seemed an uncommonly slow way to travel and nearly as dangerous as riding the train. But he was not doubting God's wisdom, nor questioning His way.

Pretty Shadow fingered his bent nose, wondering if Diamond Annie would notice. Gattis groaned and shifted his throbbing foot to ease it. He thought of the river back home. If he could just put his foot in that and let the cool dark water heal it. June lay on his back, smelling the flat, acrid staleness of the six-shooter beside his head, remembering the shock and power of the gun as it exploded, whipping in his hand as though it had a life of its own. It was an awesome, fearful thing. Rolling over on his side, June gently placed his hand upon the gun.

The Kid had just gotten his train on the track, puffing along, building up a head of steam when the Preacher woke him. "Kid, take the lantern and see if you can find some brush or chips and build up the fire. Get the round browns, not the flat whites. It'll be daylight soon. I reckon we should have breakfast ready."

The Kid threw back his soogans and got up, cursing the Preacher, the cows, and the sun that came up in the middle of the night. The Preacher rolled over to doze until the fire was ready for biscuits, leaving only Lampassas to watch the wavering lantern disturbing the peace, and darkness, and loneliness of the empty land.

CHAPTER III

ED MEHARG, forty-year-old Mustang Springs farmer, had invested the ten dollars he got from selling his dry milk cow in enough warm beer and red-eye whisky and enough Bonnie Bess to blunt his despair at the red, flinty earth that cracked open to absorb a man's sweat and life, and at the dirt-floored, two-room paling house and withering fields he called home and hope. Groping for his shoes in the darkness, he put them on, and standing up, pulled on his shirt over his head and stepped into his overalls, hooking one gallus. Mercifully blinded to the raw, gritty town with its leaning, unpainted shanties, he stepped from the darkened house of the pock-faced, pimple-bottomed Bonnie Bess, and catching the door by the leather strap, drew it across the dirt floor until it leaned in place.

Even with his fulled senses, Ed Meharg was aware that something was wrong. Twice he stopped along the road to listen, but he could not make it out. It was a sound more felt than heard, a shifting and soughing and tossing about. It was a fearful, eerie sound, like voices heard when one is alone, and it made him uneasy. The night was at its darkest before sunrise, even the white thread of the road being indiscernible. But Ed knew that he was not alone in the night. There was something else. It was not that he was being followed, but that he was surrounded, encompassed by something of the night.

Ed stopped again as something moved near him. It was like something heavy being tossed through the air without falling. Ed had heard of devils casting lots for a man's soul. Now he was afraid he had heard them.

Something flicked lightly across his face. Before him, directly in his path, one of the demons raised its huge and grotesque head. Ed recoiled in horror, stepping back and treading on a devil's tail. The devil jumped into the air and exploded into action, its four feet going in different directions, its eyes and horns pointing the way.

"O Lord," Ed screamed as a thousand devils lunged at him. Ed turned and ran toward Mustang Springs, running for the sanctuary of the church, the thousand devils behind him, clicking their pitchforks together, their cries of anguish inhuman, belched forth like thunder, shaking the very ground he ran on.

Ed Meharg ran as he prayed. First he vowed to the Lord that he would never take another drink. Then he vowed to himself he

would never again mix beer and whisky. Then he vowed to save his breath until he got into the church. But by the time he got to town, he was completely surrounded by the fiends, who raced with him down Main Street, uprooting hitching posts, shoving shanties off their foundations, knocking down porches, and tossing the paling fences into the air.

Ed Meharg passed the church surrounded by the devils, pricked by their pitchforks, lashed by their tails. "It will run like this forever," Ed cried. "Cursed to run for the rest of my life, pursued by devils."

Unaccountably, the herd swerved to the left, knocked down a fence, a picket corral, and a pigpen. Ed, seeing his chance, dived into a haystack, only to have the demons dive in with him, the straw exploding in the fury of their pitchforks. He emerged running as the herd circled back toward the town. Soon Ed could see a few cautious slivers of light where single, curious eyes peered through the cracked doors of the houses, as a legion of demons attacked the town from the east with the first faint promise of dawn appearing over their shoulders.

Miss Fairy Nell Prosper, schoolmistress, awoke from her prim, gentle sleep, and as was her habit, dressed in the early morning darkness because she did not wish anyone to know that she was dressing, and that for a transitional moment between proper night clothes and proper day clothes, she was improper. Miss Prosper had so arranged her affairs that she took care of her body predawn and postdusk so that no one might see her in the compromising position of walking to the privy. This was easy in the foreshortened days of winter, but required severe discipline in the summer.

Hurriedly, Miss Prosper dressed and put on a bonnet, although it was still dark, and slipping the straw flower basket over her arm, she backed out the back door, and with clasped hands, smiled at the lovely flowers still hidden in the dark shadows of the house. With great care she picked half a dozen irises to demonstrate that was all she was going to do, selecting the last one near the outhouse door. Picking the last one, she placed it neatly in the basket, and while pretending to smile upon it, backed into the privy, slamming the door behind her.

She lifted her skirts, half expecting to feel the cold, clammy skin of a toad against her exposed ankle, the sharp sting of a rattlesnake's

fangs in the soft flesh back of her knees, or the furry body of a tarantula on her bare, naked thighs. Brushing the spider webs from her face with a trembling hand, she stepped up on the stool and brooded over the dark and threatening unknown.

She was surprised to hear thunder, or perhaps those young men were trying to frighten her by thumping on a rawhide stretched over a rain barrel. The privy began to shake and tremble and there was a genuine bump.

There was another bump, and then the outhouse began to slowly turn on its axis and to tip dangerously. The door was banged open, knocked off its hinges, and in the light of the early dawn, Miss Prosper saw the entire garden filled with twisting, writhing snakes. With a cry of terror, Miss Prosper leapt from the outhouse, her skirts billowing as it crashed on its side.

By the middle of the morning, the ladies were standing in the street waving scented handkerchiefs and gossiping while the men put houses back on their foundations, propped up the sagging porches, and cleared the litter from the street. The mayor was making a survey of the damages. The tall, bald, bare-headed sheriff sat on an overturned rain barrel in the middle of the street and worked on a fresh chaw of tobacco.

When Lampassas led his limping, sore-footed hands down the main street, folks jumped, and some of them had started for cover before they noticed the cowboys didn't have any cows, or any horses either.

On a day of surprises, the cowboys were no disappointment. Natural they might look on a horse, but afoot, on a Sunday morning, in a wrecked town, they were picturesque. They had left their chaps and spurs in the wagon, but they limped on the high-heeled boots, and beneath their widebrim hats their faces were chapped and rough with beards.

"You folks seen any cows passing this way?" Lampassas asked, stepping over a diamond-shaped privy seat.

"Yeah, we seen some cows," the sheriff admitted.

"Did they have an undercrop with a 4F trail brand?"

"I didn't get a good look at the ear mark or the brand," the sheriff said. "All I spied was that they had two horns apiece and they couldn't seem to get both of them through the street without knocking into something."

"I reckon them was my cows, all right," Lampassas said.

"You must a been chasing them cows pretty hard to a wore your horses down to where your feet touch the ground."

"I mean to tell you about that. Our horses was rustled last night. Ever last one of them except the one that was accidentally shot. I reckon you better get up a posse."

"Tell you what I'll do," the sheriff said. "I spread the word, and if anybody spots them horses, I'll have them picked up and sold to pay for the damages done to this town. But until we get the horses, I reckon we'll have to hold you responsible."

The mayor bellied his way through the crowd, shaking hands, patting backs, carrying a yellow ledger in one hand. "Sheriff, is that man in custody?" he asked when he had attained the center of the crowd.

"He is."

"Charge him with aggravated and atrocious assault and the willful destruction of public and private property."

The sheriff declared he was holding Lampassas in jail unless Lampassas had the money to pay the damages.

Lampassas said he didn't have the money. June said Lampassas wasn't going to jail.

The sheriff apologized but explained that he was holding Lampassas for the destruction of property and June for carrying a six-shooter on or about his person.

June allowed he wouldn't give up the six-shooter.

Lampassas allowed he wouldn't go to jail.

The sheriff allowed that June wasn't to go around carrying a six-shooter on or about his person and that Lampassas wasn't going off and leaving the town all busted up, since it was his cows that did the busting.

The trouble might have become serious had not the participants been distracted by a spectacle at the far end of town. Four wide-eyed, trembling steers, linked to each other and the wagon by a tangle of harness, succeeded only in propelling themselves and the wagon in a conspicuous and erratic manner down the street. The driver stood on the wagon, holding the hopelessly snarled lines and yelling at the steers. "Woe unto you, Sodom. Whoa. God strike you dead, Judas." Seeing the group of men standing in the street, the driver took courage. "Head them off, somebody. Get a rope around them

and slow them down."

Pretty Shadow quickly made a loop and tossed it over the horns of the lead steer on the off side. With the Kid's help, he dallied the rope around a splintered post that was all that remained of the hitching rail. The steers plunged on past until the rope jerked them down in a tangle of horns and harness. While Pretty Shadow snubbed the lead steer up close to the post, the Preacher jumped down from the wagon, and with the help of the Kid, rolled the wagon back, stretching the harness taut, and kicked the steers back into line. "Jump in, boys, and we'll get after the herd," the Preacher said.

The sheriff explained that the Preacher would have a slow start if he waited on Lampassas and June; that he was holding Lampassas for owning a bunch of cows (the sheriff felt herd was inaccurate) that had busted up the town and June for carrying a six-shooter on or about his person.

"Have you ever trailed cattle?" the Preacher asked.

"I went up the trail to Abilene once."

"Did you carry a six-shooter?"

"Things were different then. We had to protect the herd from *rustlers.*"

"Ain't our horses been rustled?"

"Yeah."

"Then don't you think the law might excuse his carrying a six-shooter under the circumstances?"

"I'm going to overlook it this time," the sheriff said. "But he's going to have to put that six-shooter away and get himself out of town pronto. And I don't never want to see his backside around here again."

"Is that *agreeable to you, June?" the Preacher* asked.

"I don't know," June said. "Ain't nobody taking my six-shooter."

"But I got to hold this feller for the damage his herd done," the sheriff said.

The Preacher sat down on a barrel, took off his hat, and scratched his head. "Well, we ain't got no money. I don't know nothing else to do but for Lampassas to go to jail. Me and the boys will go round up the herd and head them back this way. That's the only corrateral we got."

Unexpectedly, the townspeople expressed sympathy for Lampassas's cause, and the mayor regretted the extra work of returning the

cows, suggesting instead that the herd be driven as rapidly as possible toward their destination.

"They're his cows," the Preacher said, pointing his hat at Lampassas. "If we was to drive them off, that'd be stealing. But we'll bring them back here to pay the damages."

The mayor was adamantly opposed to the return of the herd.

The sheriff explained that it was pointless to hold Lampassas unless he were able to pay the damages.

The Preacher volunteered to bring back the herd.

In an informal meeting, the town council decided that Lampassas could pay the damages on the way back from Trails End, provided he was unaccompanied by cows.

The sheriff assured the crowd that the excitement was over and they were free to return to whatever homes were still standing. In somewhat more direct terms he told Lampassas and his hands they were free to go.

"I was hoping to buy some supplies here," the Preacher said. "We're running a mite low on flour and coffee."

"This here is Sunday," the sheriff said.

"We can't go no farther without supplies," the Preacher said. "I reckon we'd best wait here until the store opens."

"It's open, it's open, no need to wait," said the storekeeper, gesturing at the general store, which was minus the front door and two windows. A bolt of gingham had been snagged on a passing horn and lay twisted and soiled along the street. "I don't want to disconvenience you boys none. I know you're anxious to be on your way," he said, as with a strength surprising in one so frail, he began carrying sacks of flour, beans, and coffee out to the wagon.

"That's too much flour," the Preacher said.

"Ain't no need in you boys having to come back for more."

"I don't believe we got the money to pay for that much," the Preacher said, looking at Lampassas.

"Not unless you want some cows," said Lampassas.

"No, no," said the storekeeper. "No cows, please. Just pay me on your way back. And here's a bucket of blackstrap molasses in case you boys get hungry for something sweet."

"Well, I reckon you can go now," said the sheriff, when the wagon was loaded. "There ain't nothing for you here."

"I ain't going nowhere till I get some horses," Lampassas said.

"Ain't no need to get sore, mister," the sheriff said. "We're doing the best we can. Anybody know where we can get some horses? Folks around here is farmers. They don't keep nothing except a mule or two."

"Then why is it called Mustang Springs?" asked the Preacher.

"The springs down there used to be a water hole for mustangs. But since the farmers come, there ain't been any mustangs. There ain't been any springs, neither. It's all filled with silt now."

"How far do you reckon we'd have to go to get some horses?" Lampassas asked.

"Can't never tell. Maybe on the other side of the river. Folks don't keep horses like they used to."

"How in the hell are we supposed to get the herd to the river without horses?" asked Pretty Shadow.

"How in the hell are we supposed to get horses if we don't have any money?" asked the Kid.

"We'll worry about them things when we come to them," Lampassas said.

"I believe if I had yokes on them steers instead of bridles, I could handle the wagon," the Preacher said.

"Seems like I used to have one," said the blacksmith, breaking into a run. Two or three other men also ran to look for a yoke.

"Will two be enough?" asked the blacksmith, carrying a yoke on each shoulder as he came out of his shop.

Harnessing the steers properly was slow because of the number of hands and the enthusiasm involved, until, out of patience, the blacksmith shoved the others aside and finished the job himself.

"I reckon we're ready," Lampassas said, slowly getting to his feet. The crowd was flushed with relief. Pretty Shadow, the Kid, June, and the Preacher pulled themselves erect The crowd beamed.

"I ain't going," Gattis said.

The crowd blanched.

"I can't stand on my foot."

Tenderly, the citizens of Mustang Springs lifted Gattis up to the wagon seat. The Preacher climbed up beside him, Lampassas, June, Pretty Shadow, and the Kid caught hold of the wagon stanchions, the blacksmith cut the lead steer loose, and with a shout from the crowd, off they went down the street. Old men waved goodbye and young girls threw them kisses.

"Do you think they'll come back?" asked the storekeeper.

"If they do, let's just move off and give them the town," the blacksmith said.

"We won't see them no more," the sheriff said, spitting on a pile of fresh manure. "We won't see nothing else like them, neither. But I reckon we got enough to remember."

LAMPASSAS knew nothing of rivers. The Brazos, the Nueces, the Frio he had seen. The Mississippi he had heard of. The Hudson, the Niagara were up north. The Amazon, The Ganges were unknown to him. The Nile had something to do with the Bible. The Styx, the Acheron, the Lethe he had never heard of, and he would have scoffed if he had. The Jordan he would cross when he died, hopefully not alone. But this river he knew, although he had never seen it before, the river of cattle crossings and trail drivers—the Red.

The late afternoon sun broke through the clouds so that the slow drops that fell into the heavy river were long and sunstreaked, the short wet grass glistened. It had showered all day, but not enough to make a difference in the river. The rise of the river had to be due to heavy rains on the plains, and if it was raining there now, the river would be even higher tomorrow. Lampassas turned to look at the sun breaking through the clouds before dropping beyond the edge of the world. If it didn't rain any more tonight, and if the weather were pretty tomorrow—

Lampassas turned his back on the river, looking across the valley where the herd made its way between the sand hills. The hands walked beside the cattle, watching for his signal. They walked slowly over the bright red-and-white mounds, their shoulders slumped, their feet heavy, yet holding something back for the crossing. Already they were chousing up the drag, prodding them into a faster walk, holding the formation tight for the crossing. For three days they had driven the herd over the same path to the river, and each time he had waved them off to wait another day. The cattle were getting restless; the men were on edge Lampassas knew he had to cross them soon or he would lose them. He looked back across the river, high and running fast.

"We'll wait one more day," he said, signaling for the point to turn the herd upstream to water rather than holding them in tight trail order to cross the river.

"We'll have to cross them tomorrow, irregardless," he said. "We can't wait no longer."

The Preacher, his shoulders hunched forward, his legs and slicker spread, stood, protecting his fire from the slow, slanting rain that still fell, hissing when one of the big drops hit the fire. "You get the

logs?" he asked the Kid, who was returning to the wagon with the axe in his hand.

"Yeah, they're down on the river. Cottonwoods. They'll float the wagon if anything will," the Kid said, replacing the axe in the tool box on the side of the wagon.

"What we'll do is run the wagon axle-deep into the water, float the logs up under it, and lash them to the axles. We'll run a rope over to the other side, and when she rises off the wheels, the river will swing her right on across."

Above the sound of the river the Kid heard another sound. High and lonely. Sounding lost and sad. At first he thought it was the wail of a coyote or the song of the night herders, distorted by distance and the noise of the river. But when he heard it again, he knew it was not the call of an animal and it was not the high-pitched cry of a water fowl. It was at the same time human and unearthly. Involuntarily, he shivered.

"River got you worried, Kid?" the Preacher asked, walking up behind him. "Maybe we'll cross tomorrow and the hardest part will be over."

"Do you think anybody ever crossed a herd before without horses?"

"I reckon not. I reckon we're going to be the original," said the Preacher. "Across the river there might be horses for us. I been praying."

The Kid stood staring across the river. Then he heard it again, lonely and sad, yet lovelier than any song he had ever heard. "Did you hear that?" he asked.

"Hear what?"

"I thought I heard singing. Coming from the river."

"Singing?"

"It was kinda high and lonely. But pretty. Not very loud, though."

"I didn't hear anything. Probably just the wind."

"It was kinda like a woman's voice. Calling to you—not calling you to come, exactly, but making you want to come just the same. Making you want to quit everything else and just come."

Together they stood before the river, the Kid looking into the dark and unknown future beyond, the Preacher, his eyes dimmed by time, looking over the Kid's shoulder and seeing nothing but rivers to cross and golden cities to discover. Behind them they

heard the men coming to the campfire, their voices distant, tired, yet cheerful that the day was done.

"Squat, sit, or hunker, boys, the chuck's ready," the Preacher called. "Come on, Kid, let's go eat." By the time they reached the wagon, the others had washed, spread their bedrolls, and began eating.

"How's your foot, Gattis?" the Preacher asked.

"Better. I believe by tomorrow I'll be able to get my boot off."

"How do you keep up?" the Kid asked.

"Well, we ain't been going very fast, and if I walk mostly on my heel—" Gattis stopped and held up one hand, signaling for quiet. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"Sounded like singing."

"Kinda like a girl singing?" the Kid asked.

"Yeah."

"Forget the music and keep your ears on the herd. If they start moving around, we'll have to get down there and give Pretty Shadow a hand," Lampassas said.

The Kid finished his supper, dropped his plate in the wreck pan, and walked up to the front of the wagon where the tongue pointed north across the river.

"The Kid can't get his mind off the river," the Preacher said.

"I been thinking about that," Lampassas said. "There ain't no way of knowing how deep the water is. I thought Gattis could take the point because he can swim. We'll get the herd headed into the water pretty good, and he can go out with them to keep them from turning back. The water's too swift for them to turn upstream. The rest of us will keep them moving into the water, and we'll follow as far as there's good footing. If there's swimming, we'll cross with the drags. We can grab hold of a horn or a tail to steady us.

"That leaves the wagon on this side. Preacher, you drop off after the drags has taken to the water. Pretty Shadow is going to take the rope over. As soon as we get it around something pretty strong, we'll wave a shirt and you can ride the wagon across. I aim to drive the herd back from the river until they get good and thirsty. Then we'll run them into the water until they hit the opposite bank or hit bottom. Sink or swim."

Talk of the coming day and its dangers had a sobering effect

upon the men, and they lay back silently on their bedrolls, heads pillowed on the familiar saddle leather, smoking or chewing, watching the fire or the night with tired but sleepless eyes.

"Pa, Pa." The Kid's voice rose above the sound of the river, faint and quavering.

"Jamie fell in the river," Lampassas said, jumping up. "Hold on, Jamie. Don't yell or you'll stompede the herd," he muttered as he ran to the edge of the bluff over the river with the rest of the men behind him.

"Hold on. I'll be right down to get you out."

"I'm all right, Pa."

"Then what the hell are you yelling for?" Lampassas asked.

"There's a girl down here."

"Is she drowned?"

"No. She's got a baby with her."

"Well," Lampassas said, leaning over the bluff, trying to make something out of the darkness below. "Don't bother her none."

"She's kinda wet."

"What's she doing down there?"

"She was singing," the Kid replied.

"What the hell do you make of that?" Lampassas asked, turning to the men.

"Well, tell him to bring her up to the fire and we'll see what this is all about," the Preacher suggested.

As they watched, the girl reached the top of the bluff and walked toward the wagon. Aided by the Kid she reached the fire, and they saw that she was young, wet, and set on traveling. Her limp hat, which had once been stiff and flat, folded about her head, and the once colorful but now damp and bedraggled flowers hung down over her forehead along with a lot of her hair. She was wearing a dark jacket and skirt, full sleeved, tight waisted, and full skirted, with a lacy, high-collared, grimy blouse. The skrit was muddy from the knees down, and when she turned, they saw there was a large swatch of mud across the seat. Under one arm she carried a small baby, dressed in a blue cap and gown and partially wrapped in a wet flannel blanket, and was at least as grimy as she was. In the other hand she held a carpetbag. In climbing, she had caught the hem of her dress on a corner of the carpetbag, and the upturned skirt revealed muddy underskirts, muddy, high-cut shoes, and

equally muddy, baggy white cotton stockings.

"What do you think?" Lampassas asked.

"There are three things a cow hand feels obliged to help against his better judgment," the Preacher said. "A horse in a fence, a cow in a bog, and a woman in trouble. Let's go see what we can do."

The girl watched the men as they sauntered in out of the protection of the darkness. She did not move but tightened her grip on the carpetbag and the sleeping child.

Lampassas took off his hat and addressed her. "Evening, ma'am, I hope my boy didn't bother you none. I raised him myself, and he don't know how to act—"

The girl watched Lampassas angrily, defiantly, and when he looked up and met her eyes, he forgot what he was going to say, his voice trailing off.

"Why, that's a little baby," June said, staring at the small, dirty bundle in her arm.

"What did you expect, a calf?" she asked, curling her short upper lip and flashing her black eyes at him.

"He was crying. That's why she was singing To stop him from crying," the Kid said, looking unaccountably guilty.

"Well, sit down, everybody," Lampassas said, so gruffly that the men all jumped and then quickly sat down. The girl only looked at him. "Sit down, sit down, girl," he said, more kindly. "You must be tired."

Gattis and the Kid jumped up to offer her their bedrolls to sit on. The girl set down the muddy carpetbag and sat down on it crosslegged, laying the baby in her lap and primly smoothing the dress over her knees.

"Now, let's see," Lampassas began. "What's your name?"

"Covina."

"What's the last of it?"

"There ain't no last."

"He means what's your husband's name," the Preacher explained.

"I ain't got a husband."

"Bless your heart, just a child and a widder already," the Preacher said. "Did you lose him in the river?"

"I ain't got a husband," the girl said defiantly, looking the Preacher in the eye.

Several of the hands had coughing fits, and Lampassas's atten-

tion was caught by a falling star, which he could miraculously see through the dark and overcast sky.

"Have you had supper?" the Preacher asked, when the men had finally swallowed down their throat irritations and the falling star had passed clear on the other side of the universe. The girl did not answer. "Kid, get the lady something to eat. And a cup of coffee. She looks a mite lank to me."

The steak had all been eaten, but there were some biscuits left. The Kid put them in the plate. Gattis dumped a ladle of beans over them, and while he and the Kid wrestled over the plate, June handed the girl a cup of coffee, which she gulped, although it was fresh from the fire. The Kid, managing to get the plate from Gattis, handed it to the girl, who seemed not to notice the bean juice that ran over the rim of the plate and dripped on her dress. Taking the knife June handed her, she began to eat, holding the plate clear of the sleeping baby.

"Gattis, see if we don't have a fork," the Preacher said, deploring the manners of his fellows. He turned to the girl, who was still watching them while she ate. "If you like, I'll hold the baby while you're eating."

The girl stopped with the knife halfway to her mouth and watched them through the hair that had again fallen over her forehead. Gently, the Preacher picked up the baby, careful not to touch the girl's lap, while she watched him, holding the knife poised like a weapon. When the Preacher got the sleeping baby balanced on his lap without touching her, the girl poked the knifeful of food into her mouth, accepted the fork from Gattis, and continued eating.

The men gathered around the Preacher to smile and make faces at the baby, who slept with most of his left hand inside his mouth.

"Leave him alone," the girl said. "Can't you see he's asleep? It took me long enough to get him quiet, and I don't want to have to do it again."

The men tiptoed back to their places, getting themselves fresh coffee or rolling cigarettes, observing a respectful silence while the girl ate. When she had finished, she set down her plate, drank the rest of her coffee, and leaned back, stretching. "God, that was awful."

The men nonchalantly blew their noses, scratched their heads, examined their worn boots, and hummed to themselves, pretending

not to notice.

"Now that we got you fed, I reckon we'd better decide what to do with you," the Preacher said.

"It ain't that we're not concerned," Lampassas said. "It's just that we're mighty busy men, and you sure caught us in a bind. We're planning on crossing that damn—excuse me—river tomorrow with a herd of cows, and we don't have no horses, and we don't know how in the hell—pardon me—we're going to do it. But I reckon we're bound to help you all we can. How long you reckon you been lost?"

"I ain't lost," Covina said. "I'm on my way to Trails End."

"How'd you get here?" the Preacher asked.

"I rode with a feller part of the way, and the rest of the way I walked."

"How do you aim to get to Trails End?"

"The same way."

Lampassas asked, "What about your folks? Where are they?"

"I ain't got no folks," the girl said. "My pa run me off and said he didn't never want to see my face again. My ma didn't say nothing different. I ain't going back there."

"What are you going to do?" the Kid asked.

"I'm going to Trails End and go to work so's I can take care of the baby."

"But how is a girl going to support a baby by her—" The Kid's voice failed him. His eyes and mouth popped open.

"I reckon I know what I have to do," she said.

The Kid turned from the girl to look at the other men for confirmation, but they all happened to be carefully looking the other way.

"We're going to Trails End. Why can't we take her with us?" the Kid asked, and this time he had no need to search for their eyes; they were all turned on him. But it was his father's eyes that the Kid's eyes met.

"It ain't done," Lampassas shouted, banging his fist on the ground and ending the conversation by waking the baby, who gasped once and let out a blood-curdling squall.

"Oh, hell, now you've done it," Covina said, lifting the screaming child out of the Preacher's arms. "You've waked the baby, and now I'll never get him back to sleep."

"I'm sorry," Lampassas mumbled.

"Maybe he's just wet," the Preacher said, pulling his damp trousers away from his leg.

"He's not wet, he's hungry," the girl said, angrily shaking the baby about to pacify it. The baby responded by turning red in the face, waving his clenched fists, and screaming at the top of his lungs. This brought results. The excited hands took one backward look at the nervous, high-strung herd and crowded around the baby, making faces, trying to distract the child.

The girl stopped shaking the child and laid him in her lap, resigned to his crying. "That's why I was singing to him down at the river," she said, shouting over the baby's cries. "To get him to sleep without his supper."

"Then why don't you feed him?" June asked. "Ain't what we got good enough for him?"

"He's a baby," the girl screamed. "What he wants is milk."

"Oh," the Preacher said with sudden insight. "Well, what's the matter with you boys. Get away from there. Get on the other side of the wagon."

The hands took one look at the thin, flat-chested girl and scattered into the darkness like sheep.

"We'll be right over here if you need anything," the Preacher said.

"I can't nurse him," Covina said, freeing a hand from beneath the wet child to wipe at her nose.

"What have you been feeding him?" the Preacher asked.

"I stopped at a farmhouse yesterday and they gave me some milk, but I used the last of it this morning, and it gave him the colic. He hasn't had anything to eat since."

The Preacher stepped back to the wagon. "Kid, do we have any more of that milk?"

"We used the last can yesterday," the Kid said, sneaking a look past the Preacher. The men peered from behind the wagon, and seeing all was clear, began drifting back to the fire.

"Don't you have any cows?" she asked.

"That's what we got," Lampassas said. "A herd of cows."

"I mean cows. Milk cows. Aren't any of your cows fresh?" the girl asked, again trying the shaking tactics on the wailing child, and stirring him up to a higher pitch.

Lampassas hung his head. "I'm right sorry, ma'am, but you see, we can't slow down the herd for calves to keep up, so when a cow throws a calf, June here goes out and shoots it, and after a while the cow goes dry."

The girl, aligning herself on the side of motherhood, glared hatefully at baby-killer June, who stood before the fire, his hat in his hand. "You kill little baby calves?" she asked, hugging the screaming child to her breast. June looked away.

"No, ma'am. You see—Lampassas, I been meaning to tell you," June said. "You know, after losing the horses, we been traveling kinda slow, and well, them little fellers looked so helpless, and they was keeping up—"

"You mean you didn't shoot them?"

"Well, they was keeping up and all. And they never stompeded."

"You mean them newborn calves was keeping up with the herd?"

"Well, sure, except right at first when I had to carry them some."

"Well, how many fresh cows do we have?"

"Three."

"We got three fresh cows if you can use them," Lampassas said to Covina. The girl said nothing, only looked at him.

"Boys, I purely hate to ask it of you," Lampassas said, looking at the men around him. "I've asked you to take the herd through places where the trail was closed, to trail cows afoot, to drive them across a flooded river, and now I'm going to ask you—" He paused, looked at the men and then looked quickly away. "I'm having to ask you—Hell, I've done a lot of low things in my life. I've run a store. I've sold corsets. I've patted butter. But by God I've never milked no cow, and I ain't asking nobody else to do it." And looking away, Lampassas attempted to turn a deaf ear to the cries of the hungry child.

The child, however, was not to be ignored. Turning red in the face from anger and lack of breath, the child launched scream after scream at the mother, who seemed to be used to it, and the men, who did not. Covina no longer made any effort to stop the child's cries. The men fidgeted and swore under their breath.

Gattis ducked his head, and even in the flickering, uncertain light of the fire they could see the color rising to his face. But Gattis could not destroy himself in the eyes of these men. "I—I saw Ma milk a cow once," he said. "But hell, that's t [illegible]n I left hor[illegible]

In sympathetic embarrassment, they all looked away. All except Covina, who had none of their finer feelings. "Hell, is that all you're going to do? Sit and talk about it? Show me the damn cow and I'll milk her myself," she shouted, as tears welled up in her eyes.

"Do you think you could do it?" the Preacher asked Gattis, while Lampassas looked away in shame.

"I ain't refused Lampassas yet," Gattis said. "But I ain't going to volunteer."

The Preacher looked at Lampassas, but Lampassas refused to meet his eyes. "If that baby keeps on crying, he's going to stompede the herd. It wouldn't just be milking a cow," he explained to Lampassas. "It'd be averting a stompede."

"I reckon I could give it a try to avert a stompede," Gattis said.

He fitted his hat on for business, picked up a lariat, and started in the direction of the herd.

"You'll need somebody to help you throw her," Lampassas said. "Kid, you get down there and give him a hand. June, you'll have to go along and help them find the trouble. You're the only one that knows what they look like."

"And hurry. This little feller ain't had any chuck since this morning," the Preacher said, anxious to have peace again.

Without a word to grace his departure, June got up, gave a menacing hitch to his gunbelt, and limped after the others.

"Be careful you don't frighten the herd," Lampassas said. "Cut her out and drive her away from the bedground first."

"Do you reckon he's take a little sugar and water?" the Preacher asked.

"We could try," the girl said, wiping her eyes with the hem of her dress and wiping the hair and flowers back from her forehead. "Maybe it would stop him for a while."

The Preacher scooped a cupful of water off the top of the barrel, strained it through the dirty cup towel, and mixed in some sugar. "I'll put just a drop of coffee in it to kill the taste of the mud," he said.

The girl took the cup without a word and offered it to the child by dipping her finger in it, and after tasting it herself, poking the dripping finger into the child's open and loud mouth. The liquid strangled the baby, and enraged, he screamed louder then ever.

"What do you call him?" the Preacher asked.

"I been calling him Little John. His pa's name was John."

"That don't seem right," said the Preacher. "It don't seem right to name him after somebody that don't want him."

"Well, there wasn't nobody that wanted him. I could call him Jack, or Jake, or George, or—"

"Jake's my name. Well, the boys all call me Preacher, but my real name is Jake."

"Would you mind if he was named after you?"

"I wouldn't mind."

The girl looked down at the baby in her arms and held him close. "I wouldn't feel right about calling him Jake if you didn't like him. I mean, I wouldn't feel right about using your name if you didn't care about him, if you wouldn't look after him."

"Why, sure I'd look after him," the Preacher said. "Any man that wouldn't protect a baby—"

The girl reached out and touched his hand. "Then that's what I'm going to call him. Little Jake." Roughly, she hugged the baby to her breast. "I know you'll come to good for being named after a preacher, and you won't never have to worry, because Uncle Jake is going to look after you," she said, smiling at the Preacher. "I like him better already."

"Now that we've decided on a name for the baby, maybe we can get around to deciding what to do with him," Lampassas said.

"I ain't going back home."

"You ain't going with us," Lampassas said.

"Until you get some horses, you're going to be short-handed," Covina said.

"That's true," the Preacher said. "We are short-handed."

"And getting across that river is going to take all the help you can get."

"I reckon I owe it to the boys to get all the help I can," Lampassas said.

"Damn right," said Covina.

"But I'm only taking you on until we get across the river and get some horses. And I ain't giving you nothing but a fire to sleep by and whatever there is to eat."

"That's fair enough," Covina said, holding out her hand. Annoyed Lampassas got to his knees and reached over the fire to shake hands on the bargain.

"You can do the cooking and drive the wagon, and I'll help chouse the cows," the Preacher said.

"I don't know nothing about cooking," Covina said, "but I can drive cows as well as anybody."

"We can't have a woman working alongside the men," Lampassas said.

"Why not?" the girl asked, dipping her finger in the water and poking it in the baby's mouth. "I can drive cows as good as any man you got, and any time I can't keep up, I'll drop out."

"If it was just me, I'd rather drown than have your help," Lampassas said. "But I don't rightly see how I can leave you out here alone."

"You and the baby can stay with the wagon," the Preacher said.

"I aim to earn my own way and for the baby. But I'm not cooking, and I ain't washing dishes, so why waste a hand? You don't have to worry about me. I can handle cows and I can handle men."

"I ain't never seen you handle cows," Lampassas said. "But if you don't have no more to recommend you than the way you handle men, then I reckon we'll find you underneath the next stompede."

"Well, ain't you got a nasty mind?"

"The boys will be coming back pretty soon," Lampassas said.

"Yeah. And before they get back, I rackon there's something we ought to explain to Covina."

"You mean about Pretty Shadow?"

The Preacher nodded. "I think we ought to tell you, ma'am, there's one of the boys you haven't met yet. They call him Pretty Shadow, and he's about the worst human being for women I ever seen. And if you don't watch him, he'll—he'll try to charm you."

"Tell her about June."

"Well, June carries a six-shooter, and he sometimes looks mean on account of that scar, but he wouldn't shoot anybody, so you needn't worry about that. But he's—he's healthy. So you do need to worry about that."

"And Gattis."

The Preacher nodded again. "What I'm about to tell you about Gattis I want you to hold in strict confidence, because I'm sure Gattis don't want it known. Gattis has a good heart, but he got mixed up with a girl in Georgia once and had to run away from home."

"I see," said Covina. "What about the young one?"

"That's my son," Lampassas said. "I promise he won't bother you none."

"You mean he's too young to be a son of a bitch?"

"What I mean to say," Lampassas said, "is that we got some rough edges to us, but we ain't mean minded. There ain't nothing we respect more than a—a good woman. But now, when these boys meet up with a—a woman that—that ain't exactly—nice—"

"I think what Lampassas is trying to say," the Preacher said, much to Lampassas's relief, "is that these men have been working with cows and all. They've been away from civilization, and they've kinda forgot that things ain't always the way they look. And when they see a cow with her back up, well, they naturally—"

"You mean whatever happens, I brought it on myself."

"What I mean to say is that these men take things the way they see them, and when they hear a girl cussing like a cow hand and wagging around a fatherless child, they're liable to have hard thoughts about her."

"Bullshit," Covina said. "That's the only kinda thoughts men ever have."

"We got the milk," June said to the Preacher as the Kid slowly emerged from the darkness, one foot at a time, carefully holding the bucket in both hands. "I hope to hell you didn't spill any of that precious stuff coming in," he said to the Kid. "We had a hard enough time getting it."

"I just hope the baby will take it," Covina said.

"Well, if he don't like that, we'll go out and get some bear milk," June said.

Covina took the bucket of milk and began pouring it into a cup to feed the baby. Anxious eyes followed every moment. "Careful you don't spill none of that," Gattis said.

Covina held the cup for the baby to drink. The thirsty baby fought for the cup, spilling some of the milk, while the men watched in outraged silence. "There's hardly enough here for one feeding," Covina said.

The men looked at her in disbelief. "You mean that kid drinks more milk than a calf?" June asked.

"Little Jake takes four feedings a day, and today he missed three of them," Covina said.

"That was all the critter had," June said. Angrily, he turned on Gattis. "You said that was all the milk she had."

"Hell, when I got through milking her, her hide was already beginning to shrivel," Gattis said. "You picked it out. You must a picked a steer."

"This'll do for now," Covina said. "He'll be up before daylight wanting more and there's not enough here for two feedings."

The men fell into their blankets without a word and pretended to be asleep. "Boys, we ain't going to have no time in the morning for milking cows," the Preacher said. "So I reckon it had best be done tonight. June, do you think you can find another fresh cow in the dark?"

"By God, if I drag it out of the herd and throw it, he's going to get milk out of it, I don't care if it's Old Blue."

"ARISE and shine, wake up and aspire; God's in his heaven, the beans is on the fire," the Preacher called cheerfully in the early morning darkness, banging a spoon against the lid of a dutch oven out of sheer exuberance.

The hands awoke to darkness, drizzling rain, wet bedding, and the sounds of the tumbling river. Putting on their wet hats, they greeted the day with groans and curses, which died in their throats as soon as they remembered the girl. Covina picked up her flowered hat, put it on her head, and got up, carefully replacing the bedding over Little Jake to keep his wetness all his own. The Preacher picked up the lantern and waved in the Kid, who had stood the last watch.

June was drying his sore and enlarged nose when Covina joined the men at the washpan. She dipped both hands into the water, vigorously rubbed her face, and blowing the excess moisture from her lips, she reached blindly for the towel. "Give me the towel, dammit," she said, and June placed the wet, soiled towel in her hands. She wiped her face dry, cleaned out her ears, and hung the towel back on the wagon.

Huddled against the rain, the hands ate quickly in hollow-eyed silence, staring at the fire, watching the shadows flickering over the wagon, thinking of the task ahead. Covina sat in her bedding, holding the covered baby in her lap, eating with one hand and feeding Little Jake from a cup with the other. The baby, unaccustomedly warm, was fully content, gurgling and blowing bubbles and spilling milk as June watched with mean eyes.

"Eat your fill," the Preacher said. "We got a long way to go before supper and there won't be any more eating till then."

As quickly as they finished, the men dropped their dishes in the roundup pan for the Preacher to work on and began tying their soogans to place them in the wagon.

"If there's anything you don't think you'll need, it'd be a good idea to leave it here," Lampassas said. "No need to weigh yourself down. We can leave our boots on the bank."

The hands pulled off their slickers and emptied their pockets, some of them stripping off vests and belts, rolling them up in their bedding and placing them in the wagon. Covina wrapped the con-

tented baby in her soogans and laid him under the wagon out of the rain.

"If there's any wading to be done, I'd better get out of this," Covina said, catching her skirt in both hands and swishing it about.

"Just what do you intend on wearing?" the Preacher said.

"I thought one of you gents might lend me something."

"No self-respecting female would be caught dead in men's clothing," the Preacher said.

"Well, I ain't no self-respecting female, and if I was that's exactly how I'd be caught in the river in these self-respecting clothes. Dead."

"There is a right way and a wrong way to dress, and them clothes you have on is the right and fitting way for a young lady."

"Bullshit," said Covina. "Well, didn't none of you bring any extra clothes?"

"I got some things that would be about your size," the Kid said.

"Why, how did you know my size?" Covina asked.

While the others chuckled, the Kid, blushing, went to the wagon, unrolled his soogans, and removed the bundle of clothing he had been saving to wear into Trails End. He handed them to Covina without looking at her and went back to drying dishes.

"How do I look?" she asked when she stepped from behind the wagon in her high-button shoes, a blue suit and vest with the cuffs and sleeves rolled back, a white shirt, and a four-in-hand tie. "Anybody got a hat?" she asked. "I got to have something on my head."

The Kid got the striped and billed engineer's slouch hat and gave it to her. Covina brushed back her hair with her hand and pulled the cap on her head. "Let's go get them cows, boys," she said.

Scattering out in the first gray light of day, the hands started the herd back from the river, not stringing them out in trail order, but letting them graze. By mid-morning the drizzle had stopped, and from time to time the sun broke through the overcast, glinting off the wet grass. At noon, after giving the hands a few minutes to rest, Lampassas turned the herd back toward the river and strung them out in trail order, Gattis and himself on the point, June and Pretty Shadow in the swing, and Covina, the Preacher and the Kid prodding the drag.

Nearing the river, the leaders picked up the pace. The point gave them their heads and stayed with them; and in the drag, the hands shouted and whopped, urging on the slow, sore-footed cows. The leaders took to the river and for a moment Lampassas thought they were crossing, but when the water reached their muzzles, they stopped to drink. Cursing and yelling, Gattis and Lampassas floundered in the swift water, holding to the cows deeper into the water. The frightened cows bawled and hooked, threatening to fight.

Pretty Shadow and June tried to keep the herd in tight formation so that the oncoming cows would force the leaders far enough into the water that they would head for the opposite bank. The leaders turned back, fighting the cows being pushed into them. There was a brief mill which Gattis and Lampassas broke up before any of the cows were trampled into the water, and the herd scattered out along the bank despite the best efforts of the hands. The cattle ventured close enough to the river to drink and then stood stupidly immobile, ankle-deep in the water.

"Don't let them bull up on us," Lampassas yelled. "Get them to moving."

For perhaps another hour, the frustrated men wrestled with the cows in the treacherous water, trying to force the leaders into the river. From time to time one of the men would lose his footing and, splashing and kicking, be swept down the river past the frightened cows until he could catch a leg or tail and get his feet under him again. Back from the river, the Preacher, the Kid, and Covina, with the baby in a coat tied to her back with diapers, Indian fashion, kept the cattle from turning away from the river and scattering out in the valley.

Through the long afternoon the stalemate lasted, the drovers keeping the herd at bay, the cattle, heads down in exhaustion, legs trembling from excitement, refusing to take to the water. While Lampassas, Covina, the Kid, and the Preacher kept the herd from scattering, June, Pretty Shadow, and Gattis worked along the river, dodging hooves and horns and trying to force the cattle into the water.

Lampassas watched the sun move steadily west, watched his last hope fade and die, his dream become a past and bitter thing. Sick with frustration and fatigue, he waved the drovers in. "Let them go," he called in anger and despair and turned and walked back from

the river, sitting down on the wet ground. The sky was dark and heavy, threatening more rain, and despite the season, Lampassas felt a chill.

The Kid wondered why they couldn't abandon the herd like sailors abandoned a ship, but the Preacher reminded him that when sailors abandoned a ship, it was going down and not left floating around to bump into things.

"When you take something up, you got to lay it down," Lampassas said.

While Lampassas searched for a way to get rid of the herd, the dark, heavy clouds brought an early twilight, the herd scattered along the river to graze and sniff the air, and Old Blue investigated a strange object flapping in a tree.

Idly, Lampassas watched as Old Blue pawed the ground and shook his horns at a diaper drying on the limb of a dead mesquite. Old Blue jumped back, snorted, and lunged forward, impaling the diaper on one horn. The diaper fell over his eyes.

Lampassas and the hands laughed as the big steer snorted, and pawed, and tossed his horns, trying to shake the limp rag from his eyes. Dropping his head and grunting, he lunged forward, crashing into the mesquite tree. The mesquite quivered. A dead limb gave a sharp, dry crack and fell across the steer's haunches.

The hands started to laugh again as the steer jumped into the air with a loud snort, but the laugh died in their throats when the herd jumped with Old Blue and came down running. For a moment the hands watched the cows in disbelief. "Stompede!" Lampassas yelled, and forgetting their exhaustion, the others leapt to their feet and ran after the cows. "Stompede! Head the leaders!"

Lampassas ran, dodging the scattered cows that ran after the leaders. He was almost in the water before he realized the cows were stampeding into the river. The thought that the cows had resisted all his efforts to put them in the river and then had jumped in themselves because of a diaper struck him as being funny. "They're taking to the river," he said, looking back over his shoulder. Seeing nothing but a solid mass of hooves and horns bearing down on him, he turned and dived into the river to avoid being trampled.

The surge of joy that he had felt when the cattle first took to the water was gone now, and he felt helpless and afraid. "Gattis, take the point," he yelled, weaving his way through the cattle as

he tried to get to the downstream edge of the stampede to keep the cattle from scattering. "Gattis. Pretty Shadow. June. Somebody, take the point."

The leaders were two thirds of the way across the river when they hit swimming water and turned back into the face of the oncoming herd. With the crush of bone and the snapping of horns, the cows met head-on in a giant mill that crushed and drowned the weaker animals, and only Gattis could reach them.

Helplessly, unable to make himself heard above the roar of the river, Lampassas watched as Gattis, in trying to turn the leaders, was swept into their floundering midst. Desperately kicking at the pressing cows, Gattis tried to climb upon their backs, but was caught between them, and hung, helplessly pinned.

For a moment Lampassas thought June was going to rescue Gattis as June crawled over the backs of the cattle, firing the six-*shooter into the center of the pack and beating at the cows with* the barrel of the six-shooter. The mill broke apart and both June and Gattis disappeared into the water between the pawing and thrashing hooves.

With a groan at what he had just seen, Lampassas looked back and saw that only Pretty Shadow and Covina were still with him. Pretty Shadow, holding to a tail to steady himself in the water, was still turning the cattle across the river, unaware that no one was on the point. Covina, who appeared to have lost the baby and the engineer's cap in the excitement, was waist-deep in the water, grappling for the Preacher, who had stepped in a hole and disappeared. The Kid stood on the bank, afraid to step into the water, hoping he would be left behind.

With a cry for help, Lampassas turned his back on his son to follow his herd. He had not taken twenty steps before he lost his footing and was swept away by the current. Unable to get his feet down, he was rolled over and over and washed against a cow. Grabbing in desperation, he caught the cow around the neck, blindly hanging on until he felt his feet dragging over the bottom of the river.

Getting his feet under him, Lampassas stood up, not caring which side of the river he was on. It was the north bank. He climbed out of the slippery river, fell against a tree and looked back across the river for sight of the others. Battered, exhausted cows with

broken horns and peeled hides struggled up the bank. Pretty Shadow sat in shallow water, unable to move another step. The Kid crawled out of the river on all fours and fell down beside Lampassas. Disinterestedly, they watched as far downstream Covina walked out of the darkness of the river, dragging the Preacher behind her.

When they had caught their breath, Covina and the Preacher walked out of the water and started along the bank toward the others. The Preacher stopped short as he saw something bobbing at the edge of the water. Knowing already what it was, Lampassas and the Kid got up, and joined by Pretty Shadow, who waded out of the river, they stood looking at Gattis's body, half buried in the mud at the edge of the river.

"God, we must a run the whole damn herd over him," Covina said, turning away.

Gently, the men carried Gattis out of the water, and laying him down, they fell down to rest. "By God, we crossed her," Lampassas said, when he was able to speak.

"We got to go back," Covina said. "The baby's on the other side."

The fire burned timidly beside the river, gnawing at the wet brush and giving off faint flickers of light that cast eerie shadows at the figures about the fire.

"I got to go back and get the baby," the Preacher said, guilty because Covina had laid the baby down in order to pull him out of the hole he had stumbled into; and then she had been unable to go back for the baby because in his panic he had clung to her, dragging her across the river with him. "It was on account of me that she left it."

"I keep thinking I hear him crying," Covina said.

"That's just the river," Pretty Shadow said. "I figure June's on the other side with him. He'll look after him."

"If he was on the other side, we'd a seen a fire by now," Covina said.

"I wonder if we'll ever find him?" the Kid asked.

"I count it lucky that we found Gattis," said Lampassas.

The Kid sat upright. "Listen."

"Oh, hell," said Pretty Shadow.

"There's something out there," the Kid said.

"I heard it too," said the Preacher.

The men watched the darkness along the river bank, listening as something moved in the brush. "Maybe it's a cow," the Kid said.

"That ain't no cow. That's—that's June," the Preacher said as he saw June, still weighed down with clothes and six-shooter, blundering through the brush.

"June," the Kid said.

"Don't be yelling, now," June said, warding them off with one hand. "You'll wake the baby and I just this minute got him to sleep."

"The baby?" Covina asked.

She grabbed the baby out of June's arms, pressing him to her breast and unwrapping him to be sure he was all there.

"I wish you wouldn't do that, ma'am, I just got him to sleep," June said.

"We thought you was dead," the Kid said.

June looked down at Gattis's body beside the fire. "I knowed he wouldn't make it when I seen the way them cows had him packed in. He must a been dead by the time I got to him," June said, and then looked about him apologetically. But the men were looking at Gattis, and Covina was examining and pinching the baby.

June said, "When I got knocked under in that mill, I knowed there wasn't no use coming back up and getting stepped on, so I just started walking; and I kept on walking till I walked right on out of the river Only thing, I got turned around and come out on the other side."

"Then how did you get on this side?" asked the Preacher.

"Well, when I finally walked out of the river, I realized I was way the hell downstream and the river was running the wrong way. So, I stood up to get my bearings, and by damn, as dark as it was, there was a bridge there. Then it come to me that I was on the wrong side of the river. So I walked back to the wagon to see if anybody was left, but there wasn't nobody there but the baby, and I'd a missed him if he hadn't been crying. I picked him up and went back to the bridge. It was almost under water but still standing, so I just walked across it, and I been wandering around ever since looking for your fire."

"There was a bridge there all the time," the Kid said, "and we swum the river. We risked our lives and there was a bridge there the whole time."

"You can't never tell. It was pretty near under water. Likely it wouldn't a held no cattle," June said, unwilling to admit his heroism was unnecessary.

"Is it big enough for the wagon?" the Preacher asked.

"It's big enough, but I ain't sure what it'll hold."

"As soon as it's light, we'll cross over the bridge, round up the rest of the cows, and get the wagon," Lampassas said.

"How many cows do you reckon we lost crossing?" June asked.

"Near a hundred head," Lampassas said.

The baby began to cry.

"He's hungry," Covina said.

"I reckon we'll all be hungry before we get back to the wagon," said June, unable to remember when he had last eaten.

"Little Jake can't wait until morning," Covina said.

"God damn," Pretty Shadow said, spitting into the fire. "How in the hell are we supposed to find them cows in the dark?"

"I reckon you'll just have to look until you find them," Lampassas said.

"God a'mighty, I'm tired of being a mother," June said, getting up and crashing through the brush in the darkness. Quietly, Pretty Shadow and the Kid followed him.

AFTER the crossing, the drovers and the herd rested for two weeks. Their first day back on the trail was like any other day, hot, dusty, and long. The cattle, their sore feet rested, their bellies full of water and grass, trailed at an easy but distance-covering gait. The long column moved smoothly, evenly, without stragglers. Only the men suffered the first day. Only they were aware of the miles, counting the hours to water, watching the progress of the sun.

To cover as much distance as possible while the cattle were still fresh, they did not stop at mid-day. Since the only water was in the wagon, which the herd had already overtaken and passed, the men suffered terribly from the heat and dust through the long afternoon. Dusk came on, but the herd kept moving, pressed on by Lampassas, who was determined to drive them as far as possible the first day. Night came on, and stars twinkled through the cloud of dust that hung over the herd, but still they plodded on. With hoarse, painful voices, the men cursed the sultry night and the pale moon that rose to light their way. The cattle began to balk and had to be prodded by the weary, stumbling men the last hour before Lampassas threw the herd off the trail to rest. It was near midnight when the last dry-throated man reached the bedground, followed by the Preacher with the wagon and a barrel of water. The herd, overtired and restless after a long day's drive without water, refused to bed down, so that half the hands stood watch, walking around the milling cattle and singing, while the others ate.

"Don't waste no water washing," Lampassas said. "Let's save it for the oxen and the coffee."

The men wiped their hands and faces on their grimy bandanas and sweaty shirts, dusted off their clothes, spat the dust out of their mouths, and drank enormous quantities of water while the Preacher fried beef.

"We better all figure on standing the watch tonight," Lampassas said. "We can't take a chance on losing the herd out here without water."

The hands sat sprawled on the ground, sipping their coffee, too tired to complain. Their jaws worked slowly as they tried to chew the tough meat. Their lips were cracked open and bleeding, their tongues and throats were swollen and raw from lack of water, and

shouting at the cattle in the dust.

"I'll keep the coffee boiling all night so's you can get some when you make a round," the Preacher said.

"We'll have to take it a little easier tomorrow on account of the cows," Lampassas said. "We'll start as soon as it's light and let them rest some in the heat of the day. That way they won't suffer as much and it'll give us a chance to get a drink. We'll be going slower tomorrow and the Preacher ought to be able to keep up. Maybe even have supper ready for us when we get there."

Pretty Shadow pushed his food away uneaten and reached for his sack of tobacco before he remembered that it was all gone. He pinched his mouth, wondering if a man could smoke twice-boiled coffee grounds. Behind him, the baby began to whimper.

"You boys hurry now so you can go milk," the Preacher said.

After the hands had eaten, the Preacher watered the steers that were pulling the wagon, banked the fire, and scoured the dishes with sand. Pouring a little water in a pan, he washed the cross, sour-smelling baby. The dust had worked into the folds of the baby's skin, turning his flesh raw and inflaming his eyes. Taking no heed of his screams, the Preacher bathed him and redressed him in his dirty clothes after first shaking them out. Then he fed the baby the milk which the Kid brought and put him to bed in the wagon. Little Jake had grown accustomed to his irregular life, eating in the middle of the night, sleeping through the day in the moving wagon, days of leisure during which he was petted and played with, and periods of activity during which he was largely ignored. Clean and fed, he went quickly to sleep.

Finishing a turn about the herd, Covina walked to the wagon to get a cup of coffee and to check the baby. She bent down and brushed her chapped lips across his cheek. Little Jake squirmed and sighed heavily, but he did not awaken. Covina smiled and smoothed down his hair, surprised that it was not stiff with sweat and dust like her own. Getting a cup of coffee, she sat down on the ground and rested her head on her arm, which lay along the wagon tongue.

The Preacher had already bedded down, but he woke e[illegible] time someone came t[illegible] gon for coffee. "Herd quie[illegible] asked.

"That's the noisies[illegible] en not to be running[illegible]

"Well, if we can hold them another hour, it'll be light enough to trail."

"If I'm going to be walking, I'd just as soon be going somewheres as to be walking around in circles," Covina said. With her little finger, she felt of her puffed, cracked lips. "Little Jake all right?"

"About the only time he cries any more is when I stop the wagon."

"That boy's got moving in his bones," Covina said. "I wonder if he'll ever be content to stay put when we get there?"

"By the time he gets to Trails End, he'll probably be ready to settle down to a normal life," the Preacher said, and then remembered. He wondered if he should make a point of explaining to Covina that he did not consider her life either normal or settled.

"At first I hoped we wouldn't never get there, but now I just want to get it over with," Covina said, feeling the ends of her hair where the dust and sweat had caked.

The Preacher tried to think of something to say, a warning or a rebuke. "It ain't far now," he mumbled, and throwing back his soogans and putting on his hat, he got up to fry some beef for breakfast.

Before daylight, the hands had, two at a time, eaten the tough, stringy meat, washed it down with coffee, and started the herd moving toward water. The sun rose hot and high over a pale, cloudless sky, a day devoid of wind. The dust kicked up by the sharp hooves billowed up to hang motionless over the herd, blinding and choking the men. The hands turned up their collars, turned down the brims of their hats, tied their bandanas over their mouths and noses. Still they were racked by dry coughs and sneezing. Their irritated eyes turned red and swelled. Tears stained their faces. The cattle, tired and thirsty, hung back uncertainly, stopped to mill and bowl. The wagon was able to keep the pace and took the point, while the number of hands in the drag had to be increased to keep the herd moving.

The hands lost all track of time, as with the vision of water before them, they pushed and prodded the cattle through dawn and breathless morning, the stale air and blinding heat of the long afternoon, into the promise of dusk, on into the night as long as they could hold the herd together, as far as they could push them toward water. And when the herd stopped, the men kept going

around and around the edgy cows, that would not lie down but stood sulkily about, motion implied, ready to run at the slightest provocation, so that the night was full of the threat of stampede.

The sun rose slowly, remorselessly in the pale sky above the bedground, deserted now except for a few cows that had been unable to leave with the herd and lay helpless in the sunlight, grateful for the brief, flitting shadows cast by the soaring, circling buzzards.

The torn and broken ground, the trampled vegetation, the dust that still hung above the ground clearly marked the trail that the herd had taken. Along that trail, like beads from a broken string, were other cows that had left the bedground in the predawn darkness but had been unable to stay with the leaders and were down, never to rise, or, scarcely able to stand, awaited death with lowered heads. Farther up the trail, a few lowing cows straggled back toward the water they remembered, a life's journey away. Dominated by a blind instinct to return to the last place they had watered, they tossed their heads at anything in their way, turned from their path by nothing.

The trail ended in a thick cloud of fine dust where the hands fought the stubborn cattle. The leaders, blinded by the brilliant sun that burned in the sky and glinted off the ground before them, turned back. The drag overtook the point. All semblance of herd order disappeared. The hands pushed them on to the only possible water, in Ruby Draw, somewhere ahead. Throughout the heat of the day, the men and the cattle exhausted one another. Waving shirts and hats, yelling and cursing, beating the cattle with sticks and fists, the men pushed the herd closer to Ruby Draw. The cattle milled and bawled, rattled horns, and died of exhaustion in the suffocating dust and heat at the center of the herd. A few of the cows, senseless with thirst, walked stupidly, stolidly through the curses and blows the overwrought hands threw at them. Nothing could stop them. The hands let them go.

Knowing that this day would be crucial, Lampassas had prepared himself for it. He had set himself to reach water before stopping, and he had driven himself and the herd relentlessly toward Ruby Draw. Grimly, he battled the cows, unmindful of the buzzing in his head and the pains in his lungs when he gasped for breath. His legs quivered so that he could not stand still but kept moving,

stumbling after first this remnant of the herd, then that one. He was chasing three wild-eyed, raw-boned cows when his legs suddenly refused to function and he fell face down on the ground. The abrupt cessation of movement was unbearable. His head pounded, the blood rushed to his head until he felt it would explode from the pressure. His vision blurred. He gasped and retched, unable to catch his breath. Lampassas tried to get up, but his muscles, old and overstrained, would not obey. He could not get up. He tried to call for help but no words came. He could not swallow. For a moment he thought he was going to die and in panic lay jerking on the ground, trying to get to his feet. Then he lapsed into semiconsciousness.

For a time Lampassas was conscious only of the sounds of his breathing and the ache in his throat. His mouth was dry; and he thought his throat would swell closed, choking him to death. He closed his eyes, aware that time was passing. When he opened them again, he could see clearly. He realized his hand was stinging; and when he looked at it, he saw that it was covered with little black ants. He brushed them off and raised his head to look for the herd. The men had lost more ground. The herd was getting farther and farther away from the water, and he knew the end had come. He had faced disaster before. He had lost the horses. He had lost some of the hands. From time to time he had momentarily lost his picture of the way. But he had always held on to the herd. And now there was no herd; and because there was no herd, there was no way he could on to it. All he and his men could do was battle the individual cows, and they were losing that battle.

Lampassas tried to resurrect the old dream of success, pitting his courage, enterprise, and daring against the odds and winning. But the dream was gone. Dead. He could not bring it to life again. In its place he saw himself as a fool wagering the spent strength and mad dreams of his old age against change and all the machinery of fate: the railroad, the stockyard, the plow. The thought enraged him, and the rage lent him strength. Rising to his feet, he tottered after the herd, an old and beaten man.

"To hell with them," he yelled. "Let the sons of bitches go. I don't give a damn." But his voice was hoarse and weak, and the drovers could not hear him above the bawling of the cattle. Squinting his eyes and sealing his lips against the dust, Lampassas stumbled

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through the cattle trying to help his men until he could find them and tell them to quit.

A late afternoon breeze blew up, giving them some relief from the dust and heat. Encouraged by it, Covina got to her feet but could do little to restrain the cattle. The men stopped for a moment to fee the breeze cool their blistered, sweaty faces and to breathe the freshened air. Old Blue stopped, raising his head, and stood sniffing the air. Trotting forward a few yards, the steer sniffed again, and then, lowing, headed north at a trot.

Lampassas saw the peculiar action of the big steer, but, his mind dulled by heat and exhaustion, he could not interpret it. Then, seeing other cattle sniffing the air and following Old Blue, he realized they had smelled water.

"Old Blue's smelled water," he called. "Hold up the leaders." One by one, and then in larger and larger groups, the cattle turned about and headed toward the draw in a deliberate walk that quickened into a swinging, ground-eating gait, and finally broke into a desperate, head-down, lowing trot. Knowing that he had to gain control of the herd, Lampassas doggedly set out after them.

Short of breath, doubled over with stomach cramps, Lampassas chased the cattle. He was only vaguely aware of the other hands, who were running along somewhere behind him, and sometimes completely forgot the herd in front of him and ran head-down, thinking only of the water in the draw. He stumbled and fell. For a moment he lay on the ground resting, unable to get up, and then the thought of water drove him on.

After running awhile, the cattle slowed to a walk, and then stopped altogether to stand, sides heaving, sniffing the air for smell of water. Seeing them stop, Lampassas ran harder to catch them. He passed the stragglers that could not keep up and was heading the herd when the leaders began running again. Sobbing and cursing, he slowed to a walk, hunched over against the pain in his side. His hatred of the cattle knew no bounds. He believed the cows acted as they did only to torment him; and although his purpose was to save the cattle by preventing mills and pile-ups in the draw, he would gladly have killed them instead.

When Pretty Shadow caught up with him, Lampassas began trotting again, partly because he had caught his breath but also because he did not want the hands to slacken their efforts. They saw the

Preacher coming out to meet the herd; and they knew the draw was near; but they also knew that something was wrong because the Preacher was waving to them and trying to turn the cattle. Lampassas and Pretty Shadow stopped to get their breath and looked at each other, for a moment unable to face whatever the Preacher was trying to tell them. Then they began again, running to his assistance.

"Bank's too steep," the Preacher yelled, when they got near enough to hear. "Got to turn them. Spread them out." But already the leaders had gotten past the Preacher and the thirsty cattle were plunging off the bank and into the shallow water, crowding, crushing, and piling up. Swinging sticks and lariats, the men tried to drive them apart, to spread them out.

The cattle, mad with thirst, knew no fear. In a solid mass they surged toward the water, hooking and trampling, oblivious to the men's attempts to direct them, turning on the men only when the men got between them and the water. The hands kicked and prodded at the cows, their only protection the confusion and mass of the herd.

A runty white steer, one horn pointing forward and one horn pointing back over its head, tried to get past Pretty Shadow. Pretty Shadow kicked him in the neck, but instead of ignoring the blow and crowding into the mass of cattle along the bank as the others had done, this steer jumped back and dropped its head, very much on the prod. Had it been full size, Pretty Shadow would have ducked behind some other cows, but he was too tired to run from a stunted, half-size steer. He snapped the knotted rope at the steer's nose; and it backed up, tossed its head, and lunged forward before Pretty Shadow could recoil the rope.

Pretty Shadow tried to jump out of the way, throwing out his hands to push the steer's single forward horn out of the way; but the short, curved horn struck him in the left side, just above the groin. Grunting, Pretty Shadow threw himself forward, over the steer's neck, trying to hold its head down until he could roll off the horn. The animal not powerful enough to throw Pretty Shadow, kept tossing its head, driving its horns upward in a series of sharp thrusts. Unable to scream, Pretty Shadow grunted, the sound jerked from his throat by the driving horn. Catching the horn with both hands, he pushed himself free and fell to the ground.

Pretty Shadow lay doubled up on the ground, feeling nothing except the sticky wetness that lay against his arms and a sickness in

through the cattle trying to help his men until he could find them and tell them to quit.

A late afternoon breeze blew up, giving them some relief from the dust and heat. Encouraged by it, Covina got to her feet but could do little to restrain the cattle. The men stopped for a moment to fee the breeze cool their blistered, sweaty faces and to breathe the freshened air. Old Blue stopped, raising his head, and stood sniffing the air. Trotting forward a few yards, the steer sniffed again, and then, lowing, headed north at a trot.

Lampassas saw the peculiar action of the big steer, but, his mind dulled by heat and exhaustion, he could not interpret it. Then, seeing other cattle sniffing the air and following Old Blue, he realized they had smelled water.

"Old Blue's smelled water," he called. "Hold up the leaders." One by one, and then in larger and larger groups, the cattle turned about and headed toward the draw in a deliberate walk that quickened into a swinging, ground-eating gait, and finally broke into a desperate, head-down, lowing trot. Knowing that he had to gain control of the herd, Lampassas doggedly set out after them.

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Pretty Shadow lay doubled up on the ground, feeling nothing except the sticky wetness that lay against his arms and a sickness in

his throat. He was scarcely aware of the cattle running about him. Sometimes a hoof kicked him, or a cockleburr-loaded tail lashed his face. Once a cow, seeing something in its path, hooked blindly at him, tearing his shirt and back. He knew that June was standing over him, beating at the cows with the six-shooter. Later, the Preacher stood beside June. Pretty Shadow felt himself being lifted. He screamed and fought at the hands that held him while the horn once more tore at his belly. Then he felt nothing except that he was going up into the air, and the grasping fingers could not hold him down.

"What happened?" Lampassas asked, laying a thick, stiff hand on the blanket over Pretty Shadow's shoulder.

Pretty Shadow's eyes opened. "I reckon I got too close to the herd," he said, trying to laugh but unable to.

Lampassas patted the blanket with his worn, swollen hand. He looked at his hand as though he were ashamed of the thick yellow nails and gnarled fingers. "I'm real sorry," he said. "Is there anything we can get you?"

"Since I come all this way," Pretty Shadow said, running his tongue over his cracked lips, "I'd like to have some of that water."

"It won't do you no good to be drinking water," the Preacher said.

"It won't do no harm, will it?" he asked.

"I'll get some," Covina said, taking the bucket from the wagon.

"How many did we lose?" Pretty Shadow asked hoarsely.

"I reckon there's about a hundred cows down between here and last night's bedground," Lampassas said. "About the same number still on their feet that ain't made it to water yet. Some of them will come in before morning. I don't know how many was killed or crippled in the pile-up."

"We tried to hold them," Pretty Shadow said.

"We done the best we could," Lampassas said. "There wasn't nothing else we could do."

"If we'd a had horses we could a handled them," June said.

Covina came back with a bucket of water and worked her way between Lampassas and the Preacher. The water choked Pretty Shadow, and he coughed, groaning with pain. The men looked away. Lampassas picked up the bucket, and tipping back his head, drank from it, then passed it around. Unable to look at Pretty Shadow, the men followed the progress of the bucket until it was

set aside. Then they looked at Covina.

"You're the one that said a cow wouldn't bother you if you looked him in the eye," Covina said, turning on June.

"I was talking about a stompede," June said. "I didn't mean a man could stand between a thirsty cow and water and not get run into."

"That wasn't a stompede?"

"No, I wouldn't call that a stompede."

"No, you wouldn't," she said. "You wouldn't call yourself a horse's ass neither, would you?"

"June," Pretty Shadow said. "I looked away."

"Then that's what did it. Sure, they'll charge you if you look away. I told you you had to look him right in the eye." June dropped his head, and at first they thought he was crying; but when he looked up, his eyes were dry. "Tell me which one it was, Pretty Shadow. I'll kill him."

"Don't do that," Pretty Shadow said. "You're going to make it now." Pretty Shadow looked at the Preacher, and the Preacher leaned close to hear. "I always been one to keep my word and pay my debts. I ain't never backed down on my word."

"We know that."

"I give my word to this gal, Diamond Annie, that I'd come back and marry her. I meant to do that, Preacher."

"You done your best."

"Tell her not to wait no more. I couldn't ask that of her."

"I'll tell her."

"I'm obliged. Tell her I meant to come," Pretty Shadow said. "Preacher, I got in a scrape once. Had to get out of town. She loaned me ten dollars."

"Is this the same girl?"

"Diamond Annie. Give her whatever wages is coming to me. Tell her not to wait no more. I couldn't ask that of her."

"How will I find her?"

"Ask for Diamond Annie. Red Dog Saloon. No mistaking her. Long black hair. Eyes sparkle. Why they call her Diamond Annie. Soft, gently face. Rosy lips. Wearing a lo-and-behold shiny green dress Red slippers. Feathers in her hair. When I seen her coming down the stairs that way, I thought she was the prettiest gal I ev-- saw."

"I'll find her for you," the Preacher said. "You just rest easy."

Pretty Shadow began to shiver and Covina got his bedroll from the wagon and spread it over him to keep him warm. Sitting down beside him, she tenderly stroked his head.

"Preacher, I ain't going to see Trails End again," he said.

The Preacher bowed his head. He had faced death with others many times, and each time he had felt this. What was there to say? What had he learned from those times that would give ease and comfort to this man? He knew the words, as old and familiar as death itself, as thick and heavy as the Bible. He had pronounced them how many times? Letting them roll off his tongue to sting or comfort as the Lord willed. He had never studied what to say; he had only prayed; and when he had opened his mouth, the words were there, without having to be called, without having to be thought. But now the words were gone. He had set out on a mission for the Lord; and in getting there, he had forgotten not only the words but the mission and the Lord, too.

"It's a better city than Trails End you're going to," the Preacher said. "No plows, no fences, no rivers to cross. Just sit easy in the saddle."

"Preacher, I don't reckon anybody has been throwed as often as I have. And this last horse is the worst in the string."

The Preacher explained that every man had his own horses to ride, that Pretty Shadow had had a mean string, and that what counted wasn't the kind of horses a man rode, or how many times he was thrown, but how many times he got back in the saddle. "There never was a man that couldn't be throwed," the Preacher said. "And there never was a horse that couldn't be rode, if a man had Jesus to top for him. That's what He come to earth for. Why He was born in a manger and grew up like a man. He had a pretty mean string of horses to ride, too, but He rode them. All the way to breakfast. And He showed everybody else the way they ought to ride but don't, and how they could ride if they's ride with him. And He topped Old Death, the meanest horse in a man's string. And you can ride it, Pretty Shadow. Just set your heels in the stirrups and lean back."

"Jervis Applewhite," Pretty Shadow said, and everyone started and looked about, half expecting an apparition. "That's who I am. Nobody ever called me Pretty Shadow except Annie. And then you boys. All them women I told you about. They didn't call me Pretty

Shadow. They didn't know who I was."

The men sat in silence over Pretty Shadow, each deep in his own thoughts. Covina got the baby out of the wagon to have something to hold. The night was still, and they could hear the cattle going back to the water to drink and the frogs singing for rain. June slapped a mosquito on his face. The Preacher tapped the nodding Kid on the shoulder; and when the Kid looked, he knew Pretty Shadow was dead.

Lampassas got up and walked to the wagon. Leaning against the wagon, his foot on the tongue, Lampassas looked out over the dark land. Overhead the stars glittered brilliantly just above his fingertips, like reflections from his campfire. The water was like a pale ribbon in the night, and scattered along it were the dark and peaceful shapes of the bedded cattle. It was a comforting scene, like an illustration from an old family Bible.

Lampassas rested in the quietness of the moment. He was tired, very old, and he had very nearly lost. The horses were gone and over half the cattle he had started with. Gattis and Pretty Shadow were dead. But he was going to make it now. He had won. He tried to feel what it was like to have won. He waited for relief, for triumph, for joy. Below him a broken-backed cow thrashed in the draw, grotesquely tried to rise on its forelegs, and then fell back in the water. "June," he called, his forlorn voice echoing along the draw. "Go down there and shoot that damn cow."

At dawn June got the shovel and began digging the grave, and the Kid fashioned a cross out of two sticks of wood. The Preacher asked that they mark his grave with his name so there would be some record of his dying. Finding nothing on which to write his name, Lampassas took the axe and chopped a piece out of one of the side rails on the wagon.

The Kid got out his pocket knife, rounded off the edges of the board, and prepared to cut the name into it. "What did he say his name was?"

"Pretty Shadow," the Preacher said.

The Kid carved the name into the piece of wood and blackened it by burning the letters with a heated pothook. With a length cut from Pretty Shadow's rope, he hung it over the cross.

CHAPTER VII

FROM where they held the herd, the town stood above them on the brow of a low hill. A fretwork of corrals and loading pens decorated the base of the hill. Red pendant stock cars were strung along the tracks between the red depot and the towering red water tank that seemed to rise up into the town, where building fronts reached upward two and three stories toward the sky and tumbled away in all directions until they covered the hill. The rooftops of the town were bright in the early morning sunlight, the chimneys stood etched against the soft pink morning clouds, and the windowpanes glinted the gold of the sun. From the very center of town, above the water tower and the dome of the courthouse, rose the church steeple. At the top of the steeple, a crucified weather vane indicated the direction of the wind.

"There she is," Lampassas said. "That's Trails End."

"God a'mighty," June said reverently, removing his hat. "God a'mighty."

"That's what we come to see," said the Preacher, seeing the promised city through misted eyes.

Covina was terrified, for the first time realizing the size of the city. "God, ain't it big?" Protectively, she held the baby close to her.

"I don't reckon they've seen us yet," the Kid said. "Don't seem to be nobody coming out to meet us."

Lampassas had expected a tumultuous welcome. He expected crowds of people to come out and look at the herd with curiosity and at the drovers with admiration. He expected young girls to dance and clap their hands with joy, young boys to run along beside the cattle, old men to throw their hats in the air and shout. He expected cattle buyers to meet him with bags of money to bid for the herd. "I reckon they sleep late in the city," he said.

"God a'mighty," June said softly. "God a'mighty."

"I reckon I'd better go wake them up," Lampassas said, and they chuckled nervously. Lampassas looked up at the bright but forbidding city on the hill. "Well, you all can bring the herd up slow and easy. We want them to look tame. Leave the wagon by the depot," he said, squaring his hat and jaw at the same time. "I'm going up there to do some powerful trading, and when I get done, I reckon we'll all be rich men."

Unable to contain their excitement, the men slapped each other on the back, including Covina in their camaraderie; and then Lampassas turned, and hitching up his torn and dirty trousers, which were now several sizes too big for him, he began the last solitary mile to the far end of the trail to claim the prize.

He was frightened by the suddenness with which the end had come. He had reached the end of the trail. His ambition, the dream of his life was over. He needed time to prepare himself. In a few more minutes he would be free of the herd, the men, the girl. He could go to sleep at night without listening to the cattle. He could wake up in the morning without worrying over what he would have to require of the men. If he forgot the way, he would also forget its hardships; and if his mind chose to remember it, it would be something to talk about to folks who stopped by his place to sit on the porch and rock.

Lampassas looked at the ground before him, because the sight of the big and wonderful city frightened him. But tonight, bathed and shaved, with money in the pockets of their new clothes, they would own the town.

When Lampassas looked up, he was surprised to see that weeds were growing in the cattle pens, and the fences were old and rotten and in some places had fallen down. The streets were empty. "Must be earlier than I thought," he said, mounting the steps of the depot.

The station agent, a thin, pale, bespectacled man with a thin, pale mustache, had a bit of dust trapped in a corner of the room when he heard the door open. "Do fer you?" he asked, bending over with his duster to whisk the dust into the pan.

"You the cattle buyer for the railroad?" Lampassas asked.

"Huh? What? Who, me?" the agent asked, looking back over his shoulder at the door. What he saw was a shriveled, dirty, long-haired, bearded man in a large frayed hat, torn and patched clothes, and unrecognizable footwear.

"Where's the cattle buyer?" Lampassas asked.

"Cattle buyer? There ain't no cattle buyer here. This here is the railroad depot."

"I reckon there are some buyers in town," Lampassas said.

"Could be. There ain't nothing else."

"I reckon it's all right if I put my herd in your holding pens"

"You got a cow?" the agent asked, warily eyeing Lampassas.

"Six hundred head."

"Where'd you get six hundred cows?"

"Texas."

"That so?" the agent said, trying to humor him. "Huh, huh, huh," he laughed. In the corner the telegraph clattered.

"They're right out there," Lampassas said, pointing out the window.

"Let me look at them cattle." Keeping the desk between himself and Lampassas, the agent edged along the wall. Still facing Lampassas, he turned his head and looked out the window, and then turned and looked again. "My God," he said, slapping off his eyeshade. "Them ain't cows. Them's horny toads."

"I drove them all the way from Texas," Lampassas said proudly.

"I can see that," the agent said. "There ain't nothing left but legs and horns. My God, look at that one. There ain't enough hide on him to make a shoelace."

"They're all for sale," Lampassas said. "Ever last one."

The agent looked at Lampassas and backed away from him, bumping into the wall. "You brought them here from Texas to sell?"

Puzzled, Lampassas stared at him. "Ain't this Trails End?"

"No, it ain't. This here is Grandview."

"Grandview?" Lampassas felt dizzy. Reality seemed to be falling away from him. "I followed the trail just the way they told me. I—I never heard of no Grandview before. You sure this ain't Trails End?"

"I *think* it used to be Trails End," the agent said. "But folks didn't like that name. Said it wasn't progressive enough. So they changed it to Grandview."

"Don't they ever have any cows in them pens out there?"

"Not since I been here."

"Don't the trains come through here any more?"

"Ever Thursday evening. Drummer special."

Lampassas sank down on a bench along the wall. The agent, keeping his eyes on Lampassas, slid along the wall to the door of the baggage room, reaching down and pushing it open. "Ab," he called without looking inside the room.

Beyond the door, five men sat huddled around a small table. No one spoke. There was a sigh, a sweeping of the hands; one man pronounced an oath, another slid his cards across the table, shifted

the fat cigar in his mouth, and stood up. "Yeah?"

Ab walked into the office, closing the door behind him. He was a large man, wearing black shiny boots, a big white Stetson, fawn-colored coat and trousers, and the thinnest of string ties and the widest of leather belts, each held by a silver buckle. "What do you want?"

"Feller there says he wants to sell some cows," the agent said, gesturing to Lampassas.

Ab looked at the old tramp sitting against the wall and them back at the agent. "This your idea of a joke?"

"He's got a herd right out here."

Ab walked over to the window and looked out. Deliberately, he reached up and removed the cigar from his mouth. "God almighty, I ain't seen anything like that in ten years."

"You ain't a cattle buyer," Lampassas said.

Ab looked at Lampassas, squinting through the smoke and rolling the cigar in his mouth. "I used to be one," he said. "I used to be the best there was. Right now I'm selling windmills. What the hell are you?"

"Cow man," Lampassas said. "Ever last one of them cows is for sale."

"I used to buy cows like that," Ab said, staring at his cigar as he rolled it between his thumb and middle finger. "I've seen them cows come in here till it looked like the world was made of horns. Hell, I'll never forget them days. When the cattle come, the women and flies come with them. It's hard to say which was the thicker, but the flies you could brush off. Good-lookers too, them women was, with silk parasols, and high-heel shoes. But them days are gone," Ab said with a sigh, spitting a bit of the chewed cigar out the window. "Ten years. And out here that's a long time. There ain't a cow in this country less it's a moo cow, and you couldn't find a decent-looking woman in the whole town. And if you did, she's be respectable. Hell, you have to close the door to play poker any more."

up. "All for sale."

"Yeah, but who would you sell them to? You might be able to sell a few of them to a circus. Their hides might be worth something if they weren't all scarred up. You might could sell some of the horns. Look nice over a bar or a big fireplace. Not even an Indian would eat one of them now. Too civilized."

Lampassas looked up at Ab. The fight had gone out of him. "I ain't trying to make money any more," he said. "But I got to have enough to pay the boys and what I owe to Mr. Fulton back home."

"How many boys you got?"

"Seven," Lampassas said, including Covina, Pretty Shadow, Gattis, and himself.

"A man'd be a fool to buy them wore-out old cows," Ab said. "But I reckon I made my share off of them. I reckon I owe it to them old cows to make a offer. I'll swap you a railroad ticket to Denison per man for the herd."

"We don't want no railroad tickets," Lampassas said, getting to his feet. "We aim to go back the way we intended to come. Horseback."

Lampassas sank down on the bench. Ab walked over to him, placing his fat hand on Lampassas's shoulder. "Look, old-timer, I ain't going to let a cattleman down," he said, squeezing Lampassas's shoulder. "I owe them too much, I reckon. I'll give you a dollar a head for the hides."

"I owe more than that to the boys," Lampassas said. "After what they went through to get the herd here I got to give them something. And I got to take that five hundred dollars back to Mr. Fulton. I give my word."

"Excuse me a moment," Ab said, stepping into the back room. Patiently, he waited until the boys finished their hand and gave him their attention. "Who wants part of some Texas cows? If we take the whole six hundred we can get them for four dollars a head."

"What do they look like?"

"Worst-looking bunch of cows I ever saw."

"I'll take a hundred head for the Wild West show," said one player, pushing a stack of chips to Ab's side of the table.

"I'll take the best eighty pairs of horns," said another.

"Hell, give me a hundred," said the third. "Have them butchered and I'll send them to that orphanage in Illinois. I promised the

senator I'd do something for them."

They turned and looked at the fourth player. "I don't deal in cows," he said. They waited. "Oh, hell, give me twenty-five. I'll have their horns knocked off and peddle them for milk cows. Only hurry up. I'm losing money ever hand you ain't here."

"I'll expect you boys to cut me in on something some time," Ab said, and then he stepped back into the office and closed the door behind him.

"I talked to my friends in there," he said to Lampassas, "and they offered to back me up to two dollars a head. That's be twelve hundred dollars. That's the best I can do, and it's costing the money to talk to you."

"Hides is four dollars in Texas," Lampassas said.

"Then you should a sold them in Texas. Or maybe you want to turn them around and drive them all the way back. Twelve hundred, that's my final offer."

Squinting, Lampassas tried to figure it out. It came to five hundred dollars for Mr. Fulton and a hundred dollars apiece for him and the boys.

Ab picked up a sheet of paper from the agent's desk and rapidly scribbled on it, then handled it to Lampassas with the pen. "Here, you sign this bill of sale."

"We drove them from Texas," Lampassas said. "The last of their kind. And they walked the whole way. They swum the rivers. They went without water."

"I can't give you no more money," Ab said. "I done told you that."

"I got to have that five hundred dollars," Lampassas said. "I got to pay the boys."

Ab shrugged. Lampassas picked up the pen, dipped it in the inkwell, and deliberately wrote his name. The agent snatched the draft out of his hand. "I'll translate this into cash," he said. He opened the safe, took out a box, lifted out a handful of bills, and deftly sorted out the money. "There you are," he said, shoving the pile of bills at Lampassas. "One thousand dollars." Then he counted out two hundred dollars for himself. "Commission and stock-pen charges," he said. Busily, he stuck the money in his pocket, and closed and locked the safe.

Ab picked up the stack of bills, placed them in Lampassas's hand.

and catching him by the elbow, helped him to his feet and guided him to the door. "It has been a pleasure dealing with you, my friend," Ab said, patting Lampassas on the back and gently shoving him out of the office.

Lampassas stumbled out of the door and sat down on the steps. Spreading out before him was the herd, which the hands were slowly, hopefully grazing behind the wagon toward the stock pens.

Lampassas waved them in. Seeing his signal, the hands looked at one another, not wishing to be the first to quit the herd and go rushing to town. Together, they sauntered through the grazing herd and up to the depot.

"Nobody's watching the herd," the Kid warned as they crowded around Lampassas.

"Let them go to hell for all I care," Lampassas said. "Don't none of them belong to us any more."

"Whoopee," they shouted, throwing their hats into the air, dancing around and startling the cattle.

Lampassas looked up at them standing above him. "Boys, they wouldn't give me nothing for the cows."

"How come?" June asked.

"Because they ain't worth nothing," Lampassas said. "Nobody wants them any more."

They stared at him in disbelief. In the past months, the cattle had assumed a worth greater than anything they knew, more valuable than their own lives. They could not comprehend the kind of world in which the cattle were of no importance.

"You mean them cows?" Covina asked, hitching the baby up on her shoulder and pointing at the ragged, thin-flanked, hump-shouldered, sway-backed cattle.

"That's the finest herd of cows I ever seen," June said. "They can outwalk, outrun, outfight, and outswim any damn herd in the country."

"He give me a thousand dollars for the hides," Lampassas said.

"The hides!" Covina said, stricken at the thought that they had driven the cattle a thousand miles to sell for leather.

"You mean he's going to kill them cows?" June asked.

"That's all they're good for," Lampassas said bitterly. "They're freaks. That's what they are. Freaks. I got a thousand dollars for the hides. Five hundred of that I promised to Mr. Fulton, and I

reckon I'll keep my word. I can't get back what I paid for the herd noways, so I'm dividing the other five hundred dollars among us equally. I figure we ought to give Gattis a full share and send it to his folks. We wouldn't a got across the river without him. The Preacher's taking Pretty Shadow's share to his sweetheart. I'm giving Covina a share so she can—fix herself up. She worked like the rest of us."

"That's less than a hundred dollars a man," the Kid said.

"It ain't much for the hardest work a man was ever called to do, but it's all there is. If this other five hundred was mine, I'd share it with you, but it ain't. It belongs to Mr. Fulton."

"Well, I reckon it's enough for a drink, a horse, and a suit of clothes," June said. "And if a feller got a cheap horse, a cheap drink, and a cheap suit of clothes, he might have enough left over for a cheap sack of tobacco."

Grimly, Lampassas counted out the money, paying off the hands. "I thought after we got all cleaned up, we might get together at the Red Dog Saloon and pay our respects to Gattis and Pretty Shadow," he said.

In neat trail order, Lampassas on the point, June and the Preacher in the swing, Covina and the Kid in the drag, they walked across the railroad tracks, between cars broken and devoid of running gear, and started along the street into town. The big doors of the fire house were hanging uselessly, emptily from the hinges. The roof of the opera house had caved in. The courthouse was boarded up, and sunlight glittered from the broken and curtainless windows of the St. George Hotel.

Lampassas stopped. "We're here," he said. "I reckon we might as well split up."

After readily agreeing, they all stood waiting for someone to make the first move, a little frightened at the thought of being alone.

"I reckon this is my street," the Preacher said, picking a street and then waiting to see if anyone was going with him.

"I'm going that way," Lampassas said, pointing in the opposite direction.

Self-consciously, each of them picked a different street, and after promising to meet later at the Red Dog Saloon, they started on their way, scarcely looking back.

As soon as he was out of sight of the others, the Kid stepped

through the open door of an empty shell of a building, walked across the rotten floor, jumped out a back window, ran down a weed-filled alley, and came out directly behind Covina.

She turned and looked at him, and he looked away, unable to think of anything to say. He heard the wooden sidewalk creak and saw that she had turned and was walking toward town. He walked a few yards behind her, glad that the street was deserted, not only because he wanted to be alone with her, but also because he did not wish to be seen in his filthy, ragged clothes and recognized as a shiftless cowboy instead of a serious-minded railroad hand.

"Where are you going? What're you going to do?" he asked, walking along behind her, but she did not answer.

"Maybe you don't have to—do that. Maybe you could do something else."

They passed a broken-backed building, from the doorway of which three ragged children stared curiously. A drab-haired woman in apron and bare feet jerked the children back and closed the door.

"Maybe you could get married," he said, struck with admiration for his own idea. "There must be men who aren't married. I mean, just because—Why, I bet a lot of men would marry a girl that—"

"Bullshit," she said.

For almost eight years Trails End was the brightest town on the frontier. By the end of the first season there were thirty cattle pens, a railroad depot, five saloons, a dance hall, fifteen brothels, and two homes. Subsequent years showed comparable growth. The future was in longhorn cows and attendant businesses, which business was to give money to the cowboys for bringing the cows to the city and then to take the money back through various entertainments such as murder, robbery, adultery, and the subtle poisons the saloons offered. This was called a system of free enterprise, and the freer the enterprise, the better.

Occasionally, there was trouble when a man who had worked a hundred days for about the same number of dollars lost it all in a throw of the dice, the dark of an alley, or the privacy of a girl's room. Such disappointments often led a man to relieve his feelings by emptying his pistol in available targets such as mirrors, signs, and people. These excitements stimulated population growth in the person of a preacher, a doctor, three undertakers, and six law men.

The town, determined to protect lawful business interests from

their victims, hired Billy Meadows, a gunman wanted for murder in four states, to police the town. He in turn hired five more murderers to help him keep the law and built a reputation for himself as a peace officer by killing three men and a girl. He killed a farmer for seeing his current girl after her quitting time, a deputy for wanting to be sheriff, and another deputy for looking like a cowboy the sheriff was looking for. The girl he killed for getting up after he had knocked her down the third time. Billy Meadows had pride in his punch.

In addition to his reputation for keeping the peace, Billy had a reputation with the girls and kept the dance halls supplied with his castoffs. As they had no place to go when he got through with them, he generously placed them in the dance hall, accepting a cut from the proprietor for their performances.

The whole town was too busy trading thirty minutes' worth of affection for two days' worth of work, selling five cents' worth of whisky for two bits, and peddling violence for law, to notice that the railroad was moving west and so was the trail, and with them, the easy money. The town awoke from its orgy of blood and money to find that the stock pens were empty; the cowboys, gamblers, and prostitutes were gone.

The panic-stricken town passed an ordinance making drinking, gambling, prostitution, and murder illegal. Then they hired a newspaperman to report the booming future of the town. An expert came from Chicago to survey the town's needs and found that the town's name was all wrong.

"Too dreary," he said. "Not enough romance. When people think of the West, they think of romance."

The town council voted to change the name of the town to Grandview.

"Got a nice ring to it," said the man from Chicago, stuffing his pockets.

People moved away from Grandview just as they had left Trails End, leaving empty hotels, empty saloons, empty shacks. The sand piled up against the sides of the buildings, weeds grew through the floors, and the wind worried doors on rusting hinges.

Some people stayed on in Grandview because they had no place else to go, and the railroad stopped every Thursday to rescue the drummers who plunged recklessly into the heart of the country to

ferret out a last treasured dollar hidden in a fruit jar in the cellar or in a can beneath the hearth in exchange for the dream of getting on, of having one more futility than their neighbor could afford.

If the trip was a successful one, the drummers returned to Grandview just in time to catch the train. But if things had gone badly, they came to town early to console themselves with drink, cards, and lies at Jake's Place, and with Red-haired Retta on Texas Street.

Even in daylight, Texas Street was the darkest street in Grandview. Lying below the hill, the street began near the old loading pens and ran a few hundred yards parallel to the railroad tracks, ending at the new hog pens. Texas Street was not really a street at all but a weed-guarded trail between the tracks and the row of gray, rotting shacks. Most of the shacks were vacant, but it was hard to tell which ones because they all had broken shingles, broken windows, and unpainted walls. But those who knew Texas Street knew that Red-haired Retta had the widest path beaten through the weeds to her door.

The sun, rising above the hill and the town, shone through the broken window and fell on Retta's loose, puffy face. Blinking her thick yellow eyelids against the sunlight, she turned over to see who was in bed with her, her memory not being what it used to be. "Harry again. Oh, God," she thought.

"Get up," she said, digging her elbow into the ribs of the large, dark, hairy man beside her.

Retta stretched and yawned, throwing the back of her hand over her mouth, and then fingering the triangular scar on her lip. "Damn Billy Meadows," she said without passion, remembering how beautiful she had been before Billy had hit her in the mouth with his pistol barrel, knocking out a large chunk of her lip and three front teeth. The blow had spoiled her looks, and she had had to move out of the dance hall with its fancy love rooms and high-paying clientele and take up a shack on Texas Street.

"I better do something with my hair," she thought, running her broken nails through her tangled, lifeless hair.

In the good old days when she had worked in the dance hall, she didn't have to do much with her hair. Just give it a good brushing, and it would sparkle. But on Texas Street the men never noticed her hair; and she didn't have much time to brush it, and soon it lost its sparkle. She began dyeing it red, and calling herself Red-haired

Retta. It gave her a new outlook, the farmers liked it, and it added color to their lives.

"Get up," she said, shaking the farmer. She reached behind him, grabbed a handful of his long dirty hair, and pulled his head away from her. The farmer woke up. His dark eyes blinked open and then shut again as with one hand he pulled her to him, running the other down her back.

"Oh, God," she thought, feeling his rough hand tugging at her flaccid hip. "Oh, well,"

A sudden rapping on the door arrested the farmer in his exertions. "Let him wait," he said, pushing her back on the bed and forcing the interruption from his mind.

"Just a minute," Retta called, not wishing to lose a customer.

The farmer was on the verge of recapturing his former ardor when the rapping was sharply repeated. With a shout, he was halfway off the bed when Retta, with a strength and agility surprising in such a limp and shapeless body, pushed him back and ran to the door. She jerked the door open just enough to pop out her head at a freshly bathed and shaved gentleman, dressed in store-new black, high-heeled boots and a black broadcloth suit, and holding a white Stetson in his hand.

"Didn't I tell you to wait?"

"Yes ma'am, you see, I'm—"

"Then dammit, wait," Retta said, slamming the door and trotting back to the bed where the farmer was sitting up. "Hurry up," she said. "This one looks rich."

"I couldn't wait," he said.

Retta looked at him. "Damn you, you're just trying to get out of paying."

"With all that banging going on, how's a man suppose to keep his mind on his business?"

Angrily, Retta picked up his clothes and tossed them to him. "You do that again and you'll have to pay anyhow. I'm not responsible for what you do on your own. Now, you get behind that curtain and get dressed. I've got a gentleman waiting."

"I got to go. I got work to do," the farmer protested. There was no back door.

"You'll just have to wait. This is a paying customer," she said with savage sarcasm.

While the farmer picked up his shoes and disappeared behind the curtain, Retta slipped into the egg-yellow negligee that went so well with her red hair, dusted her wrinkled, yellow bosom with powder, threw the spread up over the mussed bed, and replaced the stained bolster.

"Come in," she called sweetly, reclining on the bolster.

For a moment she thought the man had gone, but then there was a gentle knocking at the door.

"Come in," she said, a little more firmly, but still keeping a sweet edge to her voice.

The gentleman rapped sharply on the door.

Cursing to herself but still keeping the smile on her face, Retta opened the door and leaned seductively in the doorway. "Did you hear me say come in?"

"Yes ma'am. You see, I'm—"

"Then dammit, come in," she said, taking his hand and pulling him inside so quickly that he dropped his hat. While he stopped to pick it up, she closed the door and leaned against it. She had handled these rich, sly ones before.

"Hope I didn't get you out of bed," said the Preacher, who was a little startled at her manner of dress. "Maybe I'd better come back later."

"I won't have no time for you later," she said.

The Preacher decided to put his hand to the plow and not look back. "What I come to see you about was a business matter," he said as solemnly as possible.

"Yeah, and I know the business," she said, giving him a push.

"No, you see, I'm—I'm looking for Diamond Annie."

"What do you want her for?" Retta asked cautiously.

"I come to give her some money," the Preacher explained.

"Then you found her, Pretty Shadow," she said, and pursing her thick red lips, she walked toward him with outstretched arms.

"I reckon I'll have to require some proof," he said.

"All you can stand, Pretty Shadow," she said, throwing her heavy arms around his neck.

"No, you don't understand. I ain't Pretty Shadow. I'm what you might call a—a emissary," the Preacher said, backing into and abruptly sitting down on the bed.

"I'll vouch for that," Retta said, gracefully sinking down on

the bed beside him and seductively throwing back her head and shoulders.

"You don't need to wait for Pretty Shadow no longer," he said, placing his soft new hat on his lap and crossing his arms over it, so that it crumpled.

"I'm mighty glad to hear that," Retta said, blowing in his ear and nibbling his neck. "*But I hope in the future you'll be a bit more* patient after knocking on the door, as there is certain things a lady's got to do before she answers."

Only by throwing his elbows behind him did the Preacher escape a reclining position. With one hand he felt along the bed for the hat, which had been knocked out of his lap, accidentally brushing Retta's knee. "I regret to tell you that Pretty Shadow won't be able to marry you," he said.

"I'm right sorry to hear that," Retta said, blowing down his collar. "*But even knowing don't change my feelings.*"

"Pretty Shadow is dead," the Preacher said sadly, averting his face to escape her wet, lippy kisses.

"Not yet he ain't," Retta said, passionately embracing him.

"Yes he is."

"No he ain't," Retta said, embracing him some more.

"I—I got something for you," the Preacher said, trying to slip out from under her suffocating weight.

"I thought you might," Retta said. "Gray hairs don't mean *nothing.*"

"You give Pretty Shadow something once," the Preacher said.

"I never give nobody nothing," Retta said. "If you got it, you got it from somebody else."

"Is ten dollars correct?" the Preacher asked.

"Ten dollars!" Retta said, scarcely able to conceal her surprise. "Why, yes, that's right. Ten dollars."

"I ain't going to give you ten dollars," the Preacher said.

"Say you ain't?"

"I'm going to make restitution."

"Not with me you ain't."

"Yes sir," the Preacher said. Sitting up and putting his hat on his head, he pulled out a roll of bills. "I'm going to give you a drover's remuneration."

Retta, who had a low opinion of most men, wasn't partial to this

"Make it a short one," June said, trying with both hands to indicate the size, in a gesture that would have included everything from a half teaspoon of caster oil to a tall lemonade. Turning his head, June tried to focus his eyes upon the face of his benefactor.

"Hidy, Lampassas," he said. "I want you to have a cordial."

The bartender succeeded in finding a bottle of whisky and after sloshing some of it into their glasses, placed the bottle between them.

"Here's to the trail back home," Lampassas said, hoisting his glass.

Hearing the doors open, they turned to see the Preacher, bareheaded, barefooted, and wearing a long saddle blanket wrapped around him Indian fashion. "God, a'mighty," June said. "The Preacher's been in a poker game."

"Daniel in the lion's den was not tried as I have been tried," the Preacher said, tenderly feeling his nose.

"You found Pretty Shadow's sweetheart?"

"I found her, all right."

"Did you tell her about Pretty Shadow?"

"I told her," said the Preacher, who knew now that Diamond Annie had called every man Pretty Shadow and that Red-haired Retta had no recollection of Jervis Applewhite. But he could not bring himself to tell Lampassas and June these things. "I ain't sure she understood."

"Did you give her the money?"

"I never had a chance. There was a man with her, and before I could give it, they took it. They took everything I had."

"Why didn't you call for help?" June asked. "I'd a helped you."

"If I'd a opened my mouth, they'd a taken the gold out of my teeth."

"Did you tell the law?" Lampassas asked.

"I thought about it," the Preacher said. "I thought it over for a long time. But would you like to go to the law and tell them that you're a parson and that a whore robbed you?"

June shook his head in sympathy and understanding. "Not unless I had my pants on," he said.

The Preacher narrowed his eyes at June and would have said something fittingly sharp and to the point had not Covina come in, followed by the Kid, who was carrying the baby. Little Jake, dressed in a fresh blue gown and a new blue cap, and scrubbed pink, rec-

ognized the men and smiled happily, jabbering and trying to stand in the Kid's arms.

The men, already made shy by the strangeness of shaven faces, cut hair, and new clothes, were awestruck at the sight of Covina in a bright yellow dress with padded shoulders, puffed sleeves, and hourglass waist.

"It ain't right you should be in a place like this," Lampassas said.

"I'm trying to act like a lady," Covina said. "But, hell, this is my first day."

Critically, Lampassas studied the Kid, who was wearing a fancy vest, a bowler, and congress gaiters instead of boots. The Kid, fidgeting under his father's steady gaze, set the baby on the bar. "Pa, I come with you because you wanted me to, and I tried to do what you wanted. But I'm nineteen now, and Covina here is seveenteen. Eighteen," he said, after looking at her. "And there's the baby to be looked after and all and, well, we thought we'd kinda throw in together."

Covina stood bravely beside the Kid, trying very hard to be a lady but ready to fight if necessary. No one looked at anyone as Lampassas felt around for words.

"Well, Jamie, I knowed this would happen some day. There comes a time to ever man when he wants to cut his own herd and brand his own name. I was kinda hoping—" Lampassas stopped, remembering Marfa. Not very suitable for a wife, folks had said. Not pretty enough. Not gentle enough. Not the kind of girl a man would choose to marry. But he had chosen Marfa. And she had suited him. The memory softened, mellowed him. Some things a man had to do on his own, and Jamie was a man now. He had crossed the river. "Covina is right smart of a woman to start out with," he began again. "But I reckon you're right smart of a man, too."

Lampassas laid his hand on Jamie's shoulder and gripped it. After a moment's hesitation over whether he should kiss Covina or shake her hand, he took her hand, and she kissed his cheek.

"He just wouldn't take no," Covina said, trying to smile.

"If you folks want to get married," the Preacher said, pulling the blanket about him, "I'll marry you."

"That's mighty kind of you," Covina said. "But we done married."

"That's where we been," the Kid said, blushing and grinning.

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"That's where we been," the Kid said, blushing and grinning.

The Preacher could not hide his disappointment. Lampassas was chagrined at having been left out on such an important occasion, but decided there were other compensations—having his son near him, watching the baby grow, seeing other babies come.

"Well, it don't matter who does it," the Preacher said, looking self-consciously at his bare feet. "What matters is getting it done." He looked at Lampassas and smiled, and with a corner of the blanket, he loudly blew his nose.

"Things might look kinda tough right now," Lampassas said, taking Covina by the arm. "But me and Jamie has always managed to pull through."

"Pa, I ain't going back," the Kid said.

"You ain't going back home?"

"Jamie's got a job," Covina said.

"But I always thought—I planned for us to go back together and—"

"You planned, Pa. I never planned."

"Jamie's got a job here," Covina said.

"There's nothing for us back there, Pa."

"I know there ain't nothing now. But we could build something. Together we could. The three of us."

"Pa, I got a job on the railroad."

"The railroad!" Lampassas said. Bitter disappointment welled up in him.

The Kid tried to explain. "The railroad's the future, Pa. It's something we can put our lives into."

But Lampassas did not understand. His son was repudiating everything he had been taught, denying every value his father lived for. Lampassas could understand no explanation for it except spite and vengeance.

The Preacher understood the Kid no better than his father did, but seeing Lampassas's suffering, he tried to console him. "Why, Jamie'll be trailing all over the country on a pair of rails," he said. "Ain't that right, Jamie? He'll be riding that big engine and doing more and seeing more than you and me ever dreamed of."

For a moment, Lampassas caught a glimpse of the vision, seeing his son churning across the earth on an iron horse. "You'll be driving one of them big trains," he said.

"Pa, that's a big job," the Kid said. "They don't give it to

beginners. A man has to be trained. Go to school. But maybe someday I can work my way up to it."

"He'll work in a crew, just like cowboys," Covina said. "They'll all work together and be friends and everything."

"Road gang," the Kid said. "We'll take care of a section of the track. Replace stringers, align the tracks, oil the side plates, cut weeds along the right of way—"

"Cut weeds? Like a nester? A damn farmer?" Lampassas asked. "That's what you want to do? That's your idea of a man's life?"

"It's just the beginning," the Kid said. "Pa, I have to start at the bottom."

"You've lost it," Lampassas said. "The dream I tried to give you. Of being your own man. Riding free. Finding your own way."

"Pa, I never had it," the Kid said. "I don't want to be alone. I don't want to be left out. I want to belong. I want to be part of something big. Don't you see, Pa? I'm going to be part of the railroad. That's something important."

But Lampassas did not see. Lampassas saw his son as one of the grubbers of the earth, one of the vast horde of bent and faceless men who tore and dug at the earth instead of riding free above it, who stopped before the great machines of the age and carried them on their backs. The vision brought him to despair. He was an old man. Unable to talk to his son. Incapable of dealing with the world. Useless. He had been left behind. Slowly, he turned away from them and poured himself a drink.

The Kid stared at his father's shoulders, which were beginning to sag with age, at the deeply lined patch of white skin left by the barber's razor just above the collar. He felt pity, complicated by feelings of guilt, for the old man who had outlived his day and now had nothing to do but wait for death to come along and get him out of the way.

He straightened his father's collar, cleared his throat, and pulled an enormous, second-hand railroad watch from his vest pocket. Holding it shoulder high, he studied its face. "We got to be going," he said. "I got to work tomorrow."

"First a drink to Gattis and Pretty Shadow," June said.

They all took a glass, except the Preacher, who proposed the toast. "To those who died to get us here: Gattis and Pretty Shadow."

Lampassas proposed a toast to Covina, Jamie, and Little Jake.

"It ain't Little Jake any more. We decided to call him Jamie after his father. Don't you think that's better?" Covina asked the Preacher.

"It's—more regular," he admitted.

They drank a toast to little Jamie, patting him on the head to see him laugh, then shook hands all around with Covina and the Kid, who were making eyes at each other, anxious to get away.

"Wait," June said. "I want to make a toast to Old Blue and the finest herd of cows that ever stompeded up the trail."

"We won't see no more like them," Lampassas said. "There may be other cows, but these was prodigies."

"They probably done started killing them," June said.

"How art the mighty fallen," said the Preacher. "Littleness has inherited the earth."

"Amen," said Lampassas.

"Commonness has become a virtue," said the Preacher. "And all cows are tame."

The station agent said it was Billy the Kid.

The constable said Billy the Kid had been in a New Mexico grave for at least ten years.

The station agent agreed that was what folks said, but allowed that if he was the Kid, he's like to pass himself off for dead also.

Ab wasn't certain who it was, but he was certain that it was a Texas gunman. "Have you seen the way he handles a gun?"

The station agent declared that not only had he seen him handle a gun but only his quick, cool thinking had prevented his seeing it mishandled on himself.

The poker players and the inspector also admitted to having seen the gun at close range.

The constable suggested they get their guns and go down to the saloon with him and arrest or shoot the man.

June, stupefied by the alcohol, was puzzled by the belligerent attitude of the constable. He did not know why the man was so angry, why he had broken up their party, or why he was bullying them. He had heard that there were such bullies at the end of the trail, masquerading as law men and hiding behind their badges. He had met such men before, men who bullied him because he was an orphan and because he swept up after horses. The old hurt came back, the old insult that he thought he had erased forever.

But it was different, too, because he was not being insulted for himself, but because he was a cow hand, and Lampassas, the Preacher, Covina, and the Kid were being insulted, too; men who had ridden the long trail, who had crossed the river, who deserved better.

"Either you give up the gun or I'm going to kill you," the constable said. June thought of defying the man, of standing up to him. He did not want to give up the six-shooter. He did not want to see the others humiliated, and he was the man who carried the gun. But the constable had a shotgun and acted like he wanted to use it. June was afraid the man wouldn't take much defiance. And June was almighty tired of the town and its petty crooks and unfriendly people. All he wanted was to buy a horse with the money he had left and to hit the trail for Texas. He had been to Trails End, and now he no longer cared whether he went home as a hero or as a coward, only that he go.

"You take it, Preacher," he said, turning to the Preacher and brushing back his coat to enable the Preacher to take the six-shooter.

When the constable saw the killer turn away so that the gun and the right hand were hidden from him, he knew it was a trick. "He's going for the gun," the constable said to himself "Shoot quick, it's a trick."

The blast slammed June back against the bar, the roar of the shotgun deafening in the quiet town. For an instant, June stood looking at the blood that sprang to the surface of his blue coat, and then he fell face down on the floor.

The constable stood holding the shotgun on the gang, but they had forgotten his presence, and he likewise was watching not them but the killer, who rolled on the floor, gasping for breath.

In his struggles, June's six-shooter was dislodged from the holster. Seeing it, several men in the crowd ran forward to pick it up. The constable, suddenly vicious, shoved them back with the barrel of the shotgun. Keeping his distance from June, who was throwing blood with every kick, the constable bent down and picked up the blood-smeared pistol by the barrel, looked at it, and slipped it into the back pocket of his overalls.

"How many notches?" someone yelled over the commotion of the crowd. "How many men did the son of a bitch kill?"

The constable turned and, pushing his way through the crowd,

tried to get outside.

June's struggles subsided, and the room became quiet. In the quietness they became aware of another sound, already growing faint. At first the spectators did not know what it was, but to the hands it was old and familiar, strangely exciting, and full of hope. From habit they raised their heads and stiffened.

"Stompede," June groaned, reaching for his hat. "Stompede."

"I hope they run clear back to Texas," the Preacher said. "I hope they cave in ever dugout, roll up ever fence, and knock down ever town they come to. O Lord, give them wings of destruction that they might tromple underfoot the signs, and machines, and works of man. Let them scatter the nesters and carpetbaggers the way Thou didst scatter Pharaoh's army. Let them wipe the slate clean, O God, that we might start all over and do it right."

June was placed in a pine box and hauled to the cemetery in the wagon, which had been sold, by mules which had been borrowed. The Preacher drove the wagon slowly through the street, and Lampassas and Covina followed behind. The Kid was cutting weeds on the railroad right of way, and the baby was being kept by a neighbor. The meager procession was met at the cemetery by a crowd of drummers, farmers, and storekeepers, dressed in Sunday clothes and come to see the last of the Texas gunmen laid to rest.

June was buried between two storekeepers, in a grave Lampassas and the Preacher had dug early that morning, and paid for with eight absurdly large western saddles. The Preacher read the eighth chapter of Romans, and Covina cried. It was in the fall of the year, and the first norther carried sand on its icy breath.

"HELLO the house," the Preacher called. He and Lampassas stood at the edge of a brown, dead corn field, the collars of their dirty coats turned up against the wind at their backs, their hatbrims rippling. Before them, exposed to the elements on the bare prairie, stood a sod house. A coyote hide covered the single window, a washtub lay overturned at the corner. A bristling yellow dog stood before the house barking, his black lips curled back from his teeth. "Hello the house."

"What do you want?" a woman called back, suddenly appearing in the doorway. The wind flattened the faded gray dress and dingy apron against her body and blew her hair in tangles about her head. Assorted children's heads appeared behind her. With the back of her she swept the hair from her face. "Shut up, Tige."

Courteously, Lampassas and the Preacher removed their hats, and the wind ruffled their long gray hair. "Would you like us to chop some wood?" the Preacher called, shouting over the distance, the wind, and the barking of the dog.

"You looking for a handout?" she called back. "Shut up, Tige."

"We're looking for work."

"I don't need no wood chopped," she said. "What else can you do?"

The two men looked at each other, hunching against the wind, trying to think of some profitable skill they possessed. "We can mend harness," the Preacher said.

"Don't need mending."

"Or repair a wagon."

"Don't need repairing."

"We're making our way back home, ma'am," Lampassas said. "Back to Texas. And we'd do most anything for a little food and a place to spend the night."

"We ain't eaten since yesterday," the Preacher said.

The woman studied them, her face stern, suspicious. Having acquired over some forty years a husband, four children, and a roof of her own, she did not easily forgive need in other. "Can you milk a cow?"

"We're cow men, not milkers," Lampassas said.

"Suit yourself," the woman said. "I don't reward laziness."

The Preacher waited, politely holding his hat in his hands, but the woman showed no signs of relenting. "We're cow men, ma'am, but we're also Christians," the Preacher said. "And I reckon we'd do a lady a favor."

"The last I seen them cows, they was way back down over yonder," the woman said, pointing back over her shoulder. "You go down there and bring them up to the house. You reckon you can drive them?"

"I reckon so," the Preacher said.

"Well, I don't want you running the milk out of them. If you get to it, you can be done by dark. My husband will be back by then, and I'll have supper ready. So get at it."

Setting their hats firmly against the wind, they walked around the house. Slowly, they plodded across the rough ground, their runover boot heels slipping and turning painfully. A hint of snow was in the air.

"Milking cows," said Lampassas, who could not believe it even after he had said it. "We have fallen on evil days."

"I don't reckon it's a disgrace as long as we're ashamed of it," the Preacher said.

"It wasn't worth it, was it?" Lampassas asked as they walked along. "Coming all that way."

"I notice how it's the first feller that does something that is the hero and the last feller that does it that is the fool," the Preacher said.

"That's right," Lampassas said. "Even though it may be harder the last time."

"I reckon it don't matter what a feller does or how well he does it so long as he does it before everbody else give it up." Lampassas said.

"Well, I have give up trailing cattle," the Preacher said.

"You ain't give up preaching?"

"The Lord ain't put me out to pasture yet," the Preacher said. "Maybe the Lord sent me to build the church we had going up the trail. You and Gattis, Pretty Shadow, June, the Kid, Covina, was the congregation, and I was the Preacher. We had the grass for a floor, the sky for a ceiling. We was out in the open where we would worship God as we pleased."

"Well, if He did, you done lost your congregation," Lampassas said.

The Preacher nodded. It was true. The Lord did seem to be done with him. Well, he wouldn't question the Lord's will. He was old, useless. This last adventure had been foolishness. His body ached with fatigue and hunger; the muscles of his legs trembled so that he walked clumsily, awkwardly over the rough ground. The only thing that mattered now was food and rest. Tomorrow maybe he could go on.

The Preacher's boot heel slipped off a rock and his ankle turned under him as he fell heavily to the ground. Sharp pains shot up his

leg as he groaned and rolled over.

"What's the matter?" Lampassas asked.

"It's my ankle. I think I sprained it," the Preacher said, lying back and gritting his teeth against the pain.

"Can you stand on it?"

"I don't think so."

"Let's try," Lampassas said, helping him up.

The Preacher tested his foot and sank back down, shaking his head. "I almost wish I'd a bought walking shoes," he said.

"You rest here and I'll go get them cows," Lampassas said. "You can help me milk, can't you?"

"I'll try," the Preacher said.

Lampassas walked away a few steps and stopped to look back. It was clear to him that the Preacher could go no farther. They could probably stay at the farmhouse milking cows until the Preacher's foot was better, but what was the use? Winter was at their backs. Ahead of them was nothing. They were through.

In his pocket was Mr. Fulton's five hundred dollars. That would get them home. He had given his word, but the word of a man who milked cows couldn't be much. "It ain't no use fooling ourselves," he said, sitting down beside the Preacher. "It was slim enough that we could walk it when you had two good feet. Now your ankle's sprained and it's fixing up to snow. I still got that five hundred dollars. If we can just make it to the train, I'll buy us tickets home."

"I hate to ask it of you," the Preacher said. "I know how much it meant to you to be able to take that money back, but I can't go no farther."

"I'll just explain to Mr. Fulton how we had to have that money and offer to work to pay it back."

They stretched out on the ground, leaning back on their elbows, their shoulders hunched against the wind, looking up at the gray and forbidding sky. The ground was cold and their muscles were stiffening, but they did not care. Soon they would have a hot meal, a warm place to sleep, and a railroad ticket home. Just as soon as the cows were milked. Counting the steps to supper, the Preacher looked down to where the fat brown cows stood chewing their cuds. They looked easy to drive, easy to milk, and he was thankful for it. Something nearer at hand caught his eye and he raised up to get a better view. "Ain't that one of them longhorn cows?"

"Where?"

"Right there," the Preacher said, pointing at the well-hidden cow. "And there's another one right over there."

"Damned if it ain't," Lampassas said, sitting up to look at the long thin face and the sharp-pointed horns. "That's that old mealy-mouthed steer that carried Pretty Shadow across the river."

"Yeah, and that one over there looks like one of our lame cows."

Lampassas began to feel the warmth of happiness, of purpose returning to him. "Them cows is taking the same trail home as we are," he said, hitting the Preacher on the back. "By God, we can just round them up and trail them back as we go."

"That's still a long way to go," the Preacher said, doubtfully.

"Hell, it ain't far now," Lampassas said. "And when we get back we'll have something. Do you think you would make it if I give you a hand?"

The Preacher sighed and felt of his ankle through his foot as Lampassas helped him to his feet.

Resting his weight on Lampassas, the Preacher hobbled along toward the two cows. Seeing them approach, the two cows broke from cover, trotted a few yards and then stopped to watch the two men struggling after them.

"Maybe you can ride one of them," Lampassas said.

"I think I'll wait till they get to know us a little better," the Preacher said. "If we can get enough of these cows together we can give them to Mr. Fulton for that five hundred dollars."

"I was thinking if we could catch up with Old Blue, we could start us a herd of our own," Lampassas said. "Swap the first crop of claves for horses, the second crop for a piece of land, build us a house—"

"Bullshit," said the Preacher, slapping his hat against his leg to start the cows again. "Old Blue's a steer."

The yellow dog leapt from ambush, snapped at one of the steers, and was sent sailing through the air. Howling, he limped for the house with his tail between his legs. The steers jumped a fence and ran through the corn field.

"Stompede," the Preacher yelled, and forgetting his sprained foot, he released Lampassas and chased after one cow while Lampassas tried to head the other. The cow tried to double back; and the Preacher jerked off his hat and sailed it through the air, hitting the cow on the ear and turning it. Lampassas scared up a third cow hiding in the corn patch, and bunching the cows together, they were chasing them south when the first snowflakes fell.

journey to washington

by Senator Daniel K Inouye with Lawrence Elliott

JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON

JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON

by

SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUYE

with

LAWRENCE ELLIOTT

A CONDENSATION

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JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON

Senator Daniel Inouye's *Journey to Washington* is the warm,i nspiring true story of an American of Japanese ancestry (nisei) who rose to eminence from humble beginnings in America's newest state, Hawaii. One of 10,000 nisei young men who volunteered for active duty after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Senator Inouye served with the legendary 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed of nisei men, who fought valiantly in Italy and France. Critically wounded in battle (he lost his right arm), he was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Distinguished Service Cross.

After his release from the Army, the young veteran became an attorney and entered local politics. Stymied at first by a solidly entrenched "Establishment," he led his party to victory in the 1954 elections for the Hawaiian Legislature and when Hawaii achieved statehood, went to Washington as a Member of the House of Representatives. In 1963 he became the first U.S. Senator of Japanese ancestry.

* * * *

Lawrence Elliot, collaborator with Senator Inouye in writing *Journey to Washington*, is author of the book, *George Washington Carver.* He began his writing career as a journalist writing for the magazine *Coronet*, and since has contributed to such periodicals as *American Weekly*, *Pageant*, and *Saga* He is a regular contributor to *Reader's Digest.*

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CHAPTER I

UP FROM QUEEN EMMA STREET

MY parents, Hyotaro and Kame Inouye, lived on Queen Emma Street in Honolulu, a teeming Japanese ghetto with two-family houses pressed one on the other and a street full of children screeching a piercing and inimitable jangle of Japanese and English. There in the early evening of September 7, 1924, I was born.

Years later the sociologists and planners would point to Queen Emma Street with horror, and describe it as a poverty pocket and a pesthole, and eventually it became the site of Honolulu's first slum clearance project. The ramshackle lines of houses were knocked over by bulldozers and the remains carted away. Grass was planted in the places where I grew up, and trees, and today it is a public park, a green oasis in the city.

I suppose that is progress. Certainly it is an aesthetic improvement over those crowded and chaotic duplexes of my earliest memory. But the thing is that I was much too young to realize how underprivileged I was and foolishly I enjoyed every moment of my childhood. As for my parents, they were so caught up in the adventure of raising a family, and worked so hard to preserve and protect it, that apparently they had no time to worry about being poor. There was always enough to eat in our house—although sometimes barely—but even more important there was a fanatic conviction that opportunity awaited those who had the heart and the strength to pursue it.

I was enchanted with the swift-moving and colorful world into which I'd been born and the world, I must say, seemed pretty pleased with me, too. As the eldest son in a Japanese household, I was, to begin with accorded a very special esteem. And since I was the most recent descendant of five generations of eldest sons, my father and grandfather swelled with paternal pride at my every yowl.

The matter of selecting a name for this newest heir to the Inouye name and fortunes precipitated one of those inevitable encounters between East and West, old and new. In traditional fashion, my father wanted to name me Taro, the second part of his own first

name. My mother, with her confirmed Methodist upbringing, opted for Daniel, a prophet she revered for his steadfast courage. That this was also the Reverend Klinefelter's (her foster father) first name buttressed her enthusiasm for it.

But one did not lightly fly in the face of one's heritage, especially when one's in-laws—who, in an earlier day, would have chosen their grandson's name and no nonsense—stood silently but purposefully waiting for the decision. On the evening when the judgment was to be made, I am told, my mother idly flipped open the pages of the Bible—and lo! the pages parted at the Book of Daniel. "Look! Look!" she whispered in awe, and my father looked and was equally moved by what seemed an incontrovertible sign, and Daniel it was.

Naturally I have never had any reason to doubt the story. It is only that knowing my mother's great dependence on the Bible, I would accept a reasonable wager that, eyes closed, she could open it to the Book of Daniel nine times out of ten.

My middle name was to be Ken, a concession to the old tongue and the old ways. Ken in Japanese means to build and in my earliest years I thought that my father, in choosing that name, intended for me to be a builder or, as I understood it at the time, a carpenter. Not until long afterward did I realize the true significance of my middle name, given with the devout hope that, as the eldest son, I would continue to build the Inouye family. In any event I was later baptized Daniel Ken Inouye by the Reverend Harry Komuro, son of the good man who had married my parents.

If loveliness of face was not my strong point, I managed apparently to compensate my parents for their enormous devotion by a certain precocious wit. My mother, admittedly a prejudiced witness, says that I was fluent by the time I was two, singing songs and conversing with adults in chirpy but completely intelligible Japanese. English was another matter. I limped along in that tongue, picking up a word here and another there—most of them on the street and hence not very serviceable for polite conversation—until I entered kindergarten, at which time my mother and father abruptly dropped Japanese and began to speak English and only English at home.

Of course this was a hardship and a sacrifice and a great personal wrench for them, but they stuck painstakingly with it,

perhaps the most striking demonstration of how far the Inouye family had traveled since my grandfather set out on the long road from Yokoyama village in Japan just 25 years before. There would remain ties of tradition and sentiment with the old country, but there would never be any confusion about my parents' allegiance: they were Americans, the proud distillation of the union between the girl from Maui who had been raised a Methodist and the boy from Kauai whose forebears had been Buddhists.

This is not to say that either one could or would summarily slam the door on their Japanese heritage. "I take from the old ways what I think is good and useful," my mother used to say. "I take from the new ways what is good and useful. Anyone would be foolish not to."

And so there were no jangling conflicts between East and West in our house, but a kind of stimulating blend of the two that characterized the entire Japanese community in Hawaii. When we ate chicken or beef, we used knives and forks. When we ate sukiyaki or tempura, we used chopsticks. Although I went to a Japanese school every afternoon, it was never permitted to interfere with my American education. Perhaps the most marked evidence of our Japanese background was a deep sense of respect and discipline. I wasn't ever spanked because it would never occur to me to disobey my parents And when my sister and brothers were born, I was clearly given to understand my responsibilities as the eldest son, being held personally accountable for all of their childish transgressions and misdemeanors. I was furthermore required to set an excellent example for them in all things, as this was the best assurance that the family would flourish and its honor remain untarnished.

Moiliili was a teeming and turbulent section of Oahu, occupied mostly by Japanese with only the most tenuous handhold up from poverty. McCully, where we moved three years later, was its economic and social twin. And both these districts were to play a significant part in my life, first as a child, and then 20 years later when I plunged into politics: in Moiliili and McCully I regularly carried all but a bare handful of precincts.

We were poor, but since all of our friends and neighbors were equally poor, I never felt deprived or sorry for myself. As far as I knew, every mother sliced a single hard-boiled egg into equal parts

—six in our case—for the family breakfast, and every father gave his sons their monthly haircuts—who had 20 cents to spare for the barber? Not until I was in high school did I see the inside of a barbershop.

When I was twelve, I was formally admitted to a sort of family council. This was definitely not in the Japanese tradition to which the very idea of decision-sharing in the home was alien; the head of a proper Japanese house decided everything. But this was my parents' way of broadening my sense of responsibility. The three of us would gather around the kitchen table and ponder the problems of the moment. Mother had managed to save $2 out of her monthly allotment: should we use it to buy John a pair of shoes, or was a blanket for May's bed a more pressing need? Mostly I contributed little, content to play my heady role on the family board of directors in silence. But my mother occasionally came up with a truly fantastic suggestion and one of them, I remember, started me into speech.

"I think," she announced at one of our sessions, "that we should have a piano."

My father could only gasp with astonishment. But I, thinking, I suppose, that this must be some kind of test of my common sense —I mean, we didn't even *know* anyone who owned a piano!— blurted out: "But none of us can play the piano!"

By which time my father had found voice and echoed, "And who among us can pay for one!"

To all of which my mother responded with tranquil silence, waiting until the sound and the fury had died down. Then she calmly faced up to each of our objections, and some we hadn't even thought of, as well, and met each one with her half-exotic, half rigidly practical logic. None of us could play because we had never had the opportunity, she said sweetly. When we got the piano, we would play. As for paying for it, she had found a suitable one for $50 that could be paid for on an installment basis. Finally, she pointed out that a piano would give the family pleasures and cultural advantages such as were available to us in no other way. Once he had gotten over his shock, my father could see that she was right—as she usually was—and gave his assent, which I seconded with still some bewilderment. And so the momentous decision was made. A few days later, the piano arrived, a massive,

far-from-new upright that had to be wrestled, this way and that, into our tiny quarters, and whose great bulk thereafter dominated the entire house. It was three years before it was fully paid for, but there is no way of calculating how much joy it brought into our home. Just as Mother had predicted, each of the kids learned to play, me least expertly of all, and it was a rare waking hour when someone was not thumping away happily on that battered instrument.

Of course the piano stands out in my mind just because it was such an incongruity in our circumstances. I mean, we were poor! My mother cooked on a tiny kerosine stove and among all six of us we had not enough clothes to fill a closet—which worked out very nicely since none of the places where we lived had a closet. Nor was there ever anything resembling leftover food at the Inouye table. With some uncanny mental gauge, Mother prepared precisely enough so that each of us got up from the table feeling a little hungry.

My sorrows were few and momentary and my most vivid memories are of the fun we had. We enjoyed each other. We even turned Mother's fixation about vitamins into a family lark. A voracious reader, she had somewhere become smitten with the importance of the nutritional values in certain foods. Eggs, milk and fresh fruit were prime vitamin sources, said the good book, and since the first two were expensive, Mother plied us with the third, which in Hawaii is available for the picking. Off we'd go on a mountain picnic and, almost automatically, we kids would scatter out into the bush, to return with armloads of guavas, mangoes, mountain apples and wild plums. This was our picnic feast, and there was always enough to cart home for the rest of the week. Whatever else we had to eat—and sometimes it wasn't much—the fruit, a quart of milk and that egg divided six ways were as unvarying as the Hawaiian sunshine.

I didn't wear shoes regularly until I was in high school,—none of us *nisei* kids did—and it was as much a matter of comfort as money. After all, this was Hawaii, a truly blessed place for a boy to grow up in.

We were a trial to our teachers, I'm sure. Many of them were *haoles* (whites) from the Mainland, properly reared and educated young ladies, and they must have been disconcerted, to say the

least, to be suddenly confronted with a ragtag crew of barefooted, sport-shirted kids whose English was liberally larded with Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian and some exotic combinations of each. But they were a wonderfully dedicated group and they did their best to make educated Americans out of us young savages. And even more important, they accepted us on our own terms—they didn't despair over us, or patronize us, or slough us off as inferiors and hopeless delinquents. They treated us as exactly what we were, a bunch of kids from poor homes with hard-working parents, with a sort of built-in eagerness to become part of the mainstream of American life, and there is no way in which I can adequately express my thanks to them.

I loved school. Each day brought its own separate reward and learning became a constantly intriguing challenge.

It was in my sophomore year in high school that I first came under the warm and rewarding spell of Mrs. Ruth King, a teacher whose influence in my young life ranked just behind that of my mother and father. She certainly didn't look inspiring, a short, plump lady in her middle forties with graying hair and eyes that seemed to look vaguely out from behind a pair of rimless glasses and to see practically nothing. But the truth was that she saw practically everything, surely nothing of any real importance that happened in her classroom escaped her notice.

Hers was the top tenth grade class at McKinley High. I don't know how I got into it and, from the very first day, I wanted out. In place of all my old live-and-let-live buddies from Moiliili and McCully, I found myself rubbing shoulders with a breed of kids who kept trying to pretend that their skin was white and their eyes were blue. And there in the midst of this pretense, surrounded by all those starched white shirts and shined shoes, was rough-and-tumble Dan Inouye, to whom a necktie was a garrote on the spirit, and shoes an encumbrance to be suffered through at funerals and in church.

In those days. McKinley High School was jokingly referred to as Tokyo High. Thanks to an ingenious system of segregation, nearly all of us there were of Japanese ancestry, and from the least affluent *nisei* families at that. It worked through a device known as the English Standard School and neatly sidestepped the law that, theoretically, opened all the public schools to everyone

regardless of race, color or creed. To be admitted to an English Standard School—which by invariable coincidence had better facilities and better faculties—one had to pass an examination. The written part was fair enough since everyone had an equal chance. But the oral test served as an automatic weeding-out factor, for rare indeed was the student of Asian parentage who could properly pronounce the "th" sound the "r" and the "l." The obvious result was that the English Standard Schools became almost the exclusive province of Caucasian youngsters, and that handful of Japanese and Chinese whose parents could afford to give them private tutoring. Not until 1955 was the last of this subtle segregation eliminated from Hawaii's public school system.

I was too young and unknowing then to be troubled by the concept of "Tokyo High." Only my stiff-necked classmates bothered me and sometimes it seemed that the only person who ever talked to me in that grade was Mrs King. "Your grammar leaves something to be desired, Dan," she would say to me privately. "Why don't you stay after school today and we'll work on it?" And I would, happily, because to be in her presence was suddenly to glimpse something beyond the narrow horizons of the life I'd known, to sense that being a clerk, or even a beach boy, was not the ultimate and only hope for a kid like me She took me seriously, which is something that no one, not even I myself, had ever done.

All at once literature was exciting and history was real. Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln suddenly stepped out of some mythical haze and became men of flesh and blood, men with great problems and the great courage to face them. I felt the bitter cold and despair of that winter at Valley Forge. I felt a sharp sense of personal loss at the death of Lincoln, the lost opportunity to bind up the nation's wounds. Whereas Japanese history had always sounded like some great impersonal pageant, the story of America had the ring of an adventure in human progress, troubles and setbacks and the inexorable march down to the present.

But most important of all, I came to believe that the giants who made American history were *my* forefathers. Always before, I had been a little embarrassed singing about the "land where my fathers died," and I always spoke of *the* fathers of *the* country. It was Mrs. King who, in some wonderfully subtle way convinced me of

least, to be suddenly confronted with a ragtag crew of barefooted, sport-shirted kids whose English was liberally larded with Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian and some exotic combinations of each. But they were a wonderfully dedicated group and they did their best to make educated Americans out of us young savages. And even more important, they accepted us on our own terms—they didn't despair over us, or patronize us, or slough us off as inferiors and hopeless delinquents. They treated us as exactly what we were, a bunch of kids from poor homes with hard-working parents, with a sort of built-in eagerness to become part of the mainstream of American life, and there is no way in which I can adequately express my thanks to them.

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I was too young and unknowing then to be troubled by the concept of "Tokyo High." Only my stiff-necked classmates bothered me and sometimes it seemed that the only person who ever talked to me in that grade was Mrs King. "Your grammar leaves something to be desired, Dan," she would say to me privately. "Why don't you stay after school today and we'll work on it?" And I would, happily, because to be in her presence was suddenly to glimpse something beyond the narrow horizons of the life I'd known, to sense that being a clerk, or even a beach boy, was not the ultimate and only hope for a kid like me. She took me seriously, which is something that no one, not even I myself, had ever done.

All at once literature was exciting and history was real. Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln suddenly stepped out of some mythical haze and became men of flesh and blood, men with great problems and the great courage to face them. I felt the bitter cold and despair of that winter at Valley Forge. I felt a sharp sense of personal loss at the death of Lincoln, the lost opportunity to bind up the nation's wounds Whereas Japanese history *had* always sounded like some great impersonal pageant, the story of America had the ring of an adventure in human progress, troubles and setbacks and the inexorable march down to the present.

But most important of all, I came to believe that the giants who made American history were *my* forefathers. Always before, I had been a little embarrassed singing about the "land where my fathers died," and I always spoke of *the* fathers of *the* coun
Mrs. King who, in some wonderfully subtle way

the essential relationship between America's founding fathers and all of America's people.

My ambition was channeled in a single direction, and a most unlikely one at that for the son of a poor *nisei* family: I had decided to become a doctor! I suppose the seeds of that dream had been sown years before when my grandmother was stricken with cancer. I remember the sad reliance of all the family on good Dr. Sato, not to save Grandmother's life, for we were all too painfully aware that the dread disease would take its inexorable course, but to ease her suffering and help her over that incredibly hard journey to final release. He came nearly every day over those long weeks, and always found time for a word of comfort to the rest of us after he had seen to Grandmother's needs.

What nobler goal could a young man aspire to, I daydreamed, than to minister to the sick and to provide strength when people most desperately needed it? Soon I was haunting the Library of Hawaii, reading everything about medicine and the men who practiced it that I could find. Without getting their hopes up, my parents encouraged me—to have a doctor in the family was the absolute peak of achievement to which a Japanese household could aspire—and my single Christmas gift for each of the next two years was a chemistry set.

Somewhere, far back in my mind, I was conscious of the growing tension between the United States and Japan. It was a worrisome thing, like a forecast of showers for a day on which you'd planned a picnic. But deep inside you had this feeling that the forecasters were wrong, that the sun would shine. That's the way I felt about the trouble in the Far East. It was disturbing because the newspapers were full of it and people talked about it, and because a conflict between my country and the country of my ancestors was too terrifying to even think about. But I never believed such a thing would come to pass, nor did hardly anyone else in the Japanese-Hawaiian community. And as that last peacetime summer edged into autumn, all of us took heart from the news that two envoys had been sent to Washington from Japan to iron out the difficulties.

By this time, the Japanese in Hawaii made up some 40 per cent of the population and were the largest single ethnic group in the Islands. In the homes of the old folks, it was not uncommon to

see a picture of the Emperor, or even a Shinto shrine. But except for a hard-shelled handful, there was no question about where their ultimate loyalty lay. We were Americans.

In response to official urging, I enrolled for a Red Cross first aid course. I think my real reason for taking it was not any expectation that I would ever need to put my new knowledge to use in an emergency, but that it contributed to my personal ambition for the future. I was pretty good at it and once I had my certificate began teaching classes of my own.

CHAPTER II

ONE SUNDAY IN DECEMBER

THE family was up by 6:30 on December 7, 1941, as we usually were on Sunday, to dress and have a leisurely breakfast before setting out for 9 o'clock services at church. Of course anyone who has some memory of that shattering day can tell you precisely what he was doing at the moment when he suddenly realized that an era was ending, that the long and comfortable days of peace were gone, and that America and all her people had been abruptly confronted with their most deadly challenge since the founding of the Republic.

As soon as I finished brushing my teeth and pulled on my trousers, I automatically clicked on the little radio that stood on the shelf above my bed. I remember that I was buttoning my shirt and looking out the window—it would be a magnificent day; already the sun had burned off the morning haze and glowed bright in a blue sky—when the hum of the warming set gave way to a frenzied voice. "This is *not* test!" the voice cried out. "Pearl Harbor is being bombed by the Japanese! I repeat: this is not a test or a maneuver! Japanese war planes are attacking Oahu!"

"Papa!" I called, then froze into immobility, my fingers clutching that button. I could feel blood hammering against my temple, and behind it the unspoken protest, like a prayer—*It's not true! It is a test, or a mistake! It can't be true!*—but somewhere in the core of my being I knew that all my world was crumbling as I stood motionless in that little bedroom and listened to the disembodied voice of doom.

Now my father was standing in the doorway listening, caught by that special horror instantly sensed by Americans of Japanese descent as the nightmare began to unfold. There was a kind of agony on his face and my brothers and sister, who had pushed up behind him, stopped where they were and watched him as the announcer shouted on:

". . . not a test. This is the real thing! Pearl Harbor has been hit and now we have a report that Hickam Field and Schofield Barracks have been bombed, too. We can see the Japanese planes . . ."

"Come outside!" my father said to me, and I plunged through the door after him. As my brothers John and Bob started out, too, he turned and told them: "Stay with your mother!"

We stood in the warm sunshine on the south side of the house and stared out toward Pearl Harbor. Black puffs of anti-aircraft smoke littered the pale sky, trailing away in a soft breeze, and we knew beyond any wild hope that this was no test, for practice rounds of anti-aircraft, which we had seen a hundred times, were fleecy white. And now the dirty gray smoke of a great fire billowed up over Pearl and obscured the mountains and the horizon, and if we listened attentively we could hear the soft *crrump* of the bombs amid the hysterical chatter of the ack-ack.

And then we saw the planes. They came zooming up out of that sea of gray smoke, flying north toward where we stood and climbing into the bluest part of the sky, and they came in twos and threes, in neat formations, and if it hadn't been for that red ball on their wings, the rising sun of the Japanese Empire, you could easily believe that they were Americans, flying over in precise military salute.

I fell back against the building as they droned near, but my father stood rigid in the center of the sidewalk and stared up into that malignant sky, and out of the depths of his shock and torment came a tortured cry: "You fools!"

We went back into the house and the telephone was ringing. It was the secretary of the Red Cross aid station where I taught. "How soon can you be here, Dan?" he said tensely.

"I'm on my way," I told him. I felt a momentary surge of elation—he wanted me! I could do something!—and I grabbed a sweater and started for the door.

"Where are you going?" my mother cried. She was pointing vaguely out the window, toward the sky, and said, "They'll kill you."

"Let him go," my father said firmly. "He must go."

I went to embrace her. "He hasn't had breakfast," she whispered. "At least have some breakfast."

"I can't, Mama I have to go." I took a couple of pieces of bread from the table and hugged her.

"When will you be back?" she said.

"Soon. As soon as I can."

But it would be five days, a lifetime, before I came back. The kid who set out on his bicycle for the aid station at Lunalilo School that morning of December 7 was lost forever in the debris of the war's first day, lost among the dead and the dying, and when I finally did come home I was a seventeen-year-old man.

In a small house on the corner of Hauoli and Algaroba Streets we found our first casualties. The shell had sliced through the house. It had blown the front out and the tokens of a lifetime—dishes, clothing, a child's bed—were strewn pathetically into the street.

I was propelled by sheerest instinct. Some small corner of my mind worried about how I'd react to what lay in that carnage—there would be no textbook cuts and bruises, and the blood would be real blood—and then I plunged in, stumbling over the debris, kicking up clouds of dust and calling, frantically calling, to anyone who might be alive in there. There was no answer. The survivors had already fled and the one who remained would never speak again. I found her half-buried in the rubble, one of America's first civilian dead of the Second World War. One woman, all but decapitated by a piece of shrapnel, died within moments. Another, who had fallen dead at the congested corner of King and McCully, still clutched the stumps where her legs had been. And all at once it was as though I had stepped out of my skin; I moved like an automaton, hardly conscious of what I was doing and totally oblivious of myself. I felt nothing. I did what I had been taught to do and it was only later, when those first awful hours had become part of our history, that I sickened and shuddered as ghastly images of war flashed again and again in my mind's eye, as they do to this day.

I had been listed as a part-time volunteer. But right after the bombing, the aid station was absorbed into the civil defense command and most of us were put on a full-time basis. I was designated a medical aide, given the night shift, 6 P.M. to 6 A.M., so I could go to school in the daytime, and put on salary of $125 a month.

It was a wildly incongruous life. In the morning I was a senior at McKinley High, just as before, trying to be concerned with congruent triangles and passive verbs and the French Revolution. In the afternoon, I fell exhausted into my bed and slept like a

dead man until 5:30, when my mother would shake me awake and, as I dashed for the door, hand me a sandwich to munch on while I bicycled to the aid station. And all through the night I tried to cope with the real problems of innocent people caught up in a tragedy of terrifying proportions. And always, day and night, I expected at any moment to hear the wailing air raid sirens signaling the return of those Japanese planes.

I was amazed at myself. Overnight I had been thrust into a position of leadership: in charge of a litter squad, training new volunteers at the aid station and directing the high school first aid program. Like everyone else in the military or civil defense command, I wore a steel helmet, carried a gas mask and a special identity card that permitted me on the streets after curfew. Me, Dan Inouye! Only a few weeks before, my biggest worries had been marks and dates and whether I'd get that neat saxophone riff in *Little Brown Jug* just right. And now I was earning $125 a month, more money than I'd ever seen in my life. It meant less than nothing to me. All I could really focus on was that I was at war.

Remembering those traumatic days, the great turning point of my life, I can see how my need to become totally involved in the war effort sprang from that invidious sense of guilt, the invisible cross lashed to the back of every *nisei* at the instant when the first plane bearing that rising sun appeared in the sky over Pearl Harbor. In actual fact, of course, we had nothing to feel guilty about, and all rational men understood this. And still I knew of no American of Japanese descent who didn't carry this special burden, and who didn't work doubly hard because of it.

Despite widely-published concern that the *nisei* were a sort of built-in fifth column in Hawaii, not a single act of sabotage or subversion was ever charged to an American of Japanese ancestry from the day the war began until the day it ended. The *nisei* bought more war bonds than any other group in the Islands. And when the Army finally permitted them to volunteer for the service, more than 10,000 men showed up at their draft boards, approximately 80 per cent of all qualified males of military age.

From the very beginning, the younger Japanese in the Islands suffered under a special onus, a deep sense of personal disgrace. They were far removed from the ways of the old country. All their

lives they had thought of themselves as Americans. And now, in this time of crisis and peril for America, they were cast from its trust and seemingly lumped with the enemy by official policy. Not only had the War Department turned them down for active service, but those already in the army were transferred to labor battalions. *Nisei* in National Guard units were summarily discharged, and those in the ROTC and Territorial Guard were stripped of their weapons.

But despite every derogation and disparagement, Japanese-Americans fought for a place in the war effort, no matter how small or menial. Older men, including my father, organized their own labor squads and volunteered for garbage details and ditch-digging. University students strung barbed wire and guarded beaches and important intersections, armed only with fury and a massive determination to make some useful contribution. And always, day after discouraging day, they struggled to persuade the government to reverse its anti-*nisei* ruling, writing letters, collecting signatures for petitions and imploring Caucasians of good will to attest to their loyalty.

For me, the nightmare quality of life went on. By night I worked at the aid station, and by day I went to school, where suddenly everything turned inconsequential and my classmates seemed to be children engaged in some insignificant charade, while just outside McKinley High the world we all knew was coming to a violent end.

I passed my college entrance exams and in September 1942, just turned eighteen, I enrolled for a premedical course at the University of Hawaii. For those of us in that wartime class, study as we might, a substantial portion of our thoughts and hopes were directed outside, fixed on that world in conflict, concentrating our fiercest aspirations on the chance that somehow they would allow us into the army. I was still doing my job at the aid station, but with the emergency in Hawaii past and the grim reports of Japanese victories at Bataan and Corregidor, working at the aid station didn't seem like much of a vital contribution any more.

The War Department had given us some small hope that their harsh pre-conceptions about Japanese-Americans might be changing. A few months earlier, *nisei* Guardsmen and early draftees had been organized into the 100th Infantry Battalion, a combat unit

not assigned to any regular outfit. Then, little more than a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, we got the news that did most to unshackle us from stigma and help us really believe that we would be allowed to fight for our country: the War Department announced that it would accept 4,000 *nisei* volunteers to form a full-fledged combat team for front-line service without restriction, without constraints. The outfit was to be activated on February 1 and would consist of the 442nd Infantry Regiment, the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion and 232nd Combat Engineer Company.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who personally passed on the plan, had this to say about it: "The proposal of the War Department to organize a combat team of loyal American citizens of Japanese descent has my full approval. No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

It is hard to express our emotions at this expression of faith by the President. It was as though someone had let us out of some dark place and into the sunlight again.

The army's original plan called for a *nisei* outfit of 1,500 from the Islands and 2,500 from the mainland. But the crush of volunteers in Hawaii persuaded them to reverse the proportions. We were given three weeks to wind up our affairs—which most of us would have been happy to do in three days—and there were sentimental and sometimes tearful farewell parties from Koko Head to Kahuku. I suppose mine was fairly typical: the parade of aunts and uncles and cousins, the last whispered words—"Be a good boy; be careful; make us proud!"—and the crumpled $5 or $10 bill pressed into my hand.

There was a flurry of packing, the goodbyes, all hasty now, and my father and I were riding the bus to Nuuanu Saturday was a regular working day for him, but he had said, "I think they will understand if I do not come in this morning," and picked up my suitcase. He was very somber. I tried to think of something to say, some way to tell him that he was important to me, and dear. But nothing came out.

"I will not talk to you of women and drinking," he said unexpectedly, "for you are nearly full-grown and have always been

good."

"I always tried, Papa."

"But far from home, in strange places and among strange people, men's weaknesses sometimes get the best of them. Only remember not to get into waters too deep for you to walk out of." He was quiet for a time, then said, "You know what *on* means in Japanese?"

"Yes." *On* is at the very heart of Japanese culture. *On* requires that when one man is aided by another he incurs a debt that is never canceled, one that must be repaid at every opportunity without stint or reservation.

"The Inouyes have great *on* for America," my father said. "It has been good to us. And now—I would never have chosen it to be this way—it is you who must try to return the goodness of this country. You are my first son and you are very precious to your mother and to me, but you must do what must be done. If it is necessary, you must be ready to...to..."

Unable to give voice to the dread words, his voice trailed off. "I know, Papa. I understand."

"Do not bring dishonor on our name," he whispered urgently.

And those same infinitely meaningful words must have been spoken thousands of times all over the Islands in those climactic last weeks when the men of the 442nd were coming together.

And now I was clambering up into the back of a GI truck, struggling to hold my balance as it rumbled off and I stood waving to the diminishing image of my father. "Goodbye!" I called long after he was out of earshot, a forlorn but resolute figure, standing there alone as if he never meant to leave. "Goodbye, Papa."

We were to sail four days later, the 2,686 Hawaiian Japanese of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

CHAPTER III

"THE FIRST BATTLE WILL BE BLOODY"

BECAUSE of the *Lurline's* great speed, we traveled without convoy and crossed the Pacific in four days. For nearly all of us, this was the first time away from home, but except for the first view of San Francisco's Golden Gate, we had scant opportunity to enjoy the splendors of the mainland. We were hustled aboard a train as soon as we docked and began wending our way through the back alleys of America toward Hattiesburg, Mississippi. When we stopped—only at night—for a few minutes of calisthenics, people would gather to stare at us, and though some of them brought us coffee and doughnuts, you could tell that others, hanging back in awe, were convinced that we were Japanese POWs.

It was mid-April when we got to Camp Shelby, and it was as though we had stepped out on another planet. We had come from a land of color and warmth and great mountains falling to the sea, and Mississippi was cold and flat and desolate wherever you looked. They marched us to our barracks—"One big draft surrounded by boards," someone called them—and divided us into companies and platoons and without any fooling around, we began those thirteen long, hard months of training that would make us soldiers.

Our C.O. was a *haole* who had gone to Roosevelt High in Honolulu, Captain Ralph B. Ensminger, and from the very beginning there wasn't a man in E Company who wouldn't have followed him into General Rommel's command post. He looked like a soldier, six feet of lean hardness and a straight-in-the-eye firmness when he talked to you. But more important, we felt that he was one of us. To be honest, there were some Caucasian officers in the early days of the 442nd who sounded off about the injustice of having to lead a bunch of Japs into battle. That would change—we had to *show* them—but Captain Ensminger knew it all along. He knew that though our skin was browner than his, we were no less citizens of these same United States. And he also knew that because not everyone thought so, we had some special problems and anxieties.

In the third week of our training, when the period of our

restriction to the company area was almost over, he assembled us between the barracks of the 1st and 2nd Platoons and ordered us to stand at ease. Then, squinting into the harsh sun, he began to speak:

"Most GIs signed up to fight the enemy. That's all. Nobody has called on them to do anything else, just to get the job finished so we can all get back to what we were doing before the war started. You men have an additional battle to fight. You have to overcome the prejudice and discrimination that will be thrown at you, that *has* been thrown at you, because your forefathers came from a country that is now our enemy."

You could hear the breathing of the man next to you. No one moved. No one made a sound.

"To anyone who has grown up in Hawaii as I have, to anyone who has gone to school with you people and worked with you and played ball with you, it's an insult to hear your loyalty called into question. It's personally painful to me to know about the indignities you've suffered: the relocation camps, the questions, the slurs. But war does strange things to otherwise sensible people and I suppose there are those who haven't yet gotten over the shock of December 7. It's not enough for them to blame it on the Japanese warlords. They need someone closer to home to blame, and they picked you."

Now there was a slight stirring in the ranks. He was getting uncomfortably close to hurts that every one of us had experienced.

"What can you do about it?" he said. "First, you can be the best damn soldiers this country has ever known. You can fight your first battle with everything you've got. And second, you can conduct yourselves with the honor for which your people have been known."

He stopped and now his gaze took in the whole company, and then he said those words that would stay with me—with all of us, I guess—all through the war: "Men, the first battle will be bloody. But those who survive it will have a chance to make a world where every man is a free man, and the equal of his neighbor. Let's not blow that chance."

I don't know how it got started, but pretty soon our pidgin-English expression, "Go for broke!" became the Combat Team motto. What did it mean? To give everything we did everything we

had; to jab every bayonet dummy as though it were a living, breathing Nazi; to scramble over an obstacle course as though our lives depended on it; to march quick-time until we were ready to drop, and then to break into a trot. The words were to become part of the language, but in those spring and summer days of 1943, if a newcomer to Shelby asked what "Go for broke" meant, chances are he'd be told it was that crazy *nisei* outfit that fought every tactical problem as though it was the Battle of Bataan.

I had progressed from rifleman, to ammunition bearer for the Browning automatic rifle, to lead scout. After that first fiasco at close-order drill, I did pretty well in my tests for assistant squad leader, and when the written grades came back, I was promoted to corporal. "The time-table is a little off," I wrote the folks. "I was going to come home a corporal and they went and made me one today. Guess I'll have to shoot for sergeant now." My mother and father were naturally proud, but also a little concerned. I had a very great responsibility, they wrote back, and all the family was counting on me to fulfill it

The training got rougher. No longer could we be sure that there'd be a hot shower and a soft bed waiting after a day in the field. As squads and platoons learned to work together, we spent days and nights far from the comforts of the post, getting used to K rations and rain on, and often in, pup tents. Then, suddenly, it was over. And we could sense it: we were ready. And on a May afternoon in 1944, we shipped out for Newport News and a couple of days later became part of a huge convoy bound for the places where the shooting was.

It took us 29 days to make the crossing. That was the period when German submarine packs infested the Atlantic, and we swerved north and south in our efforts to elude them. One day the wind would blow in your face with bitter cold, and three days later you would be sweltering under a broiling sun. And so we knew that we were backtracking and zigzagging, but exactly where we went in those 29 days, no man could say.

We landed at Naples on a beautifully blue Mediterranean morning. In the far distance, the hills looked like some land out of a fairy tale, green and gently rounded and beckoning. But the scars of war lay everywhere before our eyes. The harbor was a ruin of sunken ships and demolished buildings. Just beyond, the

gutted city seemed to quiver in expectation of another air raid. The roads, which had just been cleared, swarmed with lines of trucks and marching troops, and scurrying alongside, begging food and cigarettes and, I suppose, anything at all, was the pathetic refuse of the shattered city—men with haunted eyes and children in tatters of clothing.

Early in June, we boarded a fleet of creaky LSTs and sailed north to Anzio, debarking on a night the Germans chose to bomb a mammoth supply dump. We watched in nervous awe as each fiery explosion lit the sky and red tracer bullets zoomed upward and puffs of flak reached out for the *Luftwaffe* raiders. Before dawn, we were loaded into a truck convoy and driven to a bivouac area at Civitaveccia where for two weeks we worked out the kinks of the ocean voyage and honed our fighting skills.

Now everything happened swiftly. On June 10, the 442nd Combat Team was attached to the 34th Infantry Division. On June 24, we moved into an advanced bivouac and the next day marched 13 miles to a last assembly area. On June 26, just before dawn, we were sent into the line and had made contact with the enemy by 8:30.

It seemed so easy. We formed a line of skirmishers and advanced, squeezing off a shot whenever we saw movement across the barren land. I watched my men. I was proud of them, of the way they took advantage of every bit of cover, of the way they moved steadily ahead, as though this were no more than another tactical exercise at Camp Shelby. It was all automatic. There was no sense of danger. I felt no fear.

Our objective was the high ground around the town of Belvedere, with the 2nd Battalion driving forward on the right flank. We had gone 1,500 yards, maybe half way, when the regular crackling of German rifle fire began to be punctuated by the unmistakable *crrrump* of their 88s. The order came down to dig in. We burrowed as close to that warm earth as we could get, suddenly aware that death was flying overhead and crashing down on every side of us.

In a little while, squad leaders were called back for new orders. I crawled up a draw to a little grove of trees and got the word that the 100th Battalion was moving up in an attempt to encircle the town. We were to give them a chance to get in position and

then drive straight forward. I went back to my squad and passed the word. Then we waited, listening to those 88 shells whistle over, feeling them shake the earth around us. And while we waited, one of those shells drove into battalion headquarters and killed the first man in the outfit. It was Captain Ensminger.

The first battle would be bloody, he had said, and at last we all knew what he meant.

CHAPTER IV

GO FOR BROKE!

IT was a murderous baptism of fire. G Company, on our left flank, lost every officer but the company commander. In my platoon, I was the only squad leader unhit, and before the day was out I was made acting platoon guide. In late afternoon, burrowed down behind a narrow fold of ground and sweating out a particularly withering hail of fire, I heard the piercing whine of a shell that was headed in maybe 50 yards behind me—it's astounding how quickly you learn to track an 88 by its sound. I dug in even lower, twisting around so I could see the explosion, and in a great puff of smoke and earth and debris, I saw Jenhatsu Chinen killed. The shell all but tore his head from his body, smashing his shoulder so that his arm dangled crazily and laying his brains bare. I ran to him, totally oblivious of the continuing shelling, but of course he was beyond help. I lay beside him for a while in the ragged depression torn out of the ground by the shell that killed him, and I kept thinking of how we had horsed around together in college, of how proud his mother had been that her boy was studying to become a doctor. And now that fine mind and gentle soul were mashed into the dust and dirt of some rocky Italian field, and if I ever lived long enough to see Jen's mother again, what would I say to her? And then the shelling eased up a little and we got the word to push on, and I said so long to my friend Jenhatsu Chinen and moved back up to the head of my platoon.

In the early evening of July 6, with all three rifle companies on the line, we drove the Germans off Hill 140 and were relieved by the 100th Battalion. Our first battle was over. It had lasted four days and four nights, but to this moment the whole wildly furious thing sticks in my mind as a lifelong nightmare.

There were other days, other battles, each one leading inevitably to the next, through all the deadly weeks and months to come. Soon every man who lived bore his personal grief, and there were commanders for whom every single casualty was a personal grief.

We ran through several C.O.s, as did every company in the outfit, for the mortality rate among junior officers was very heavy. Then we got the man who would lead us to the end, Captain

Thomas W. Akins, a onetime schoolteacher turned tough as steel by the pressures of war. He was a red-headed, ramrod-straight Texan, and every bone and muscle in his body was military. We felt a special confidence following Captain Akins, he always knew exactly what he was doing and he seemed to lead a charmed life. Though he was forever right smack in the forefront of the fighting, he was one of the few officers in the regiment who was never hit.

I fought through all but two of the 442nd's battles, but the war remains fixed in my mind, not as an orderly progression of setbacks and victories, but rather as a kaleidoscopic jumble of hours and minutes and seconds, some of which make me proud, and some of which I have been twenty years trying to forget.

Few men fought in all of the 442nd's campaigns and battles. Our casualty rate was so high that eventually it took 12,000 men to fill the original 4,500 places in the regiment. But fewer men still missed a battle as long as they could stand up and hold an M1. The outfit had the lowest AWOL rate in the European theater of operations and the only men I ever heard about going over the hill had very special reasons.

In Autumn 1944 the 442nd shoved off for France. We thought the war was going to end any minute, that France would be a breeze after the unending battles for every hill in Italy. The 7th Army was driving up the Rhone Valley. North, Patton's 3rd Army was slicing straight toward Germany. It didn't seem as though anything in the world could stop us. But the hard fact is that our very bitterest fighting lay ahead, and many of the men who looked forward to France as a lark and a lot of laughs died there without seeing anything but the port of debarkation and a couple of foxholes that didn't look a bit different from Italian foxholes.

As the famous battle to rescue the "Lost Battalion" was about to begin, I remember sitting on a stump writing a last letter home and trying to ignore the periodic whines and explosions of the 88s. Someone stuck his face at mine and said the C.O. wanted to see me. I signed off with something smart like, "Time out, folks, the captain wants me to come down and tell him how to win the war." Then I grabbed my helmet and took off for the C.P. I suppose I thought there was some change in plan, I don't know. I certainly hadn't the vaguest idea that what was in store for me was a stun-

ning upheaval in my personal fortunes.

At the C.P., Captain Akins simply said that I was to report to the adjutant at regimental headquarters immediately. Any other time and place I would have asked what was up—I mean, that was an odd order to get an hour from jump-off—but he was preoccupied with preparations, the jeep driver was waiting and—well, odd or not, an order is an order.

But I couldn't help thinking, and my thoughts were wild; had there been a death in my family? was one of my men in trouble? was I?

At regimental headquarters Master Sergeant Earl Kubo, a former police lieutenant and an old buddy, was waiting for me. But instead of the casual, "Hi, Dan," he jumped to his feet and snapped off a salute. "Sir," he said, "this is for you." And he handed me an envelope.

"Thank you, sir," I said, taking it naturally assuming he was relieving some of the pressure with a harmless little joke.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, and there wasn't the trace of a smile on his face, "but I believe I'm entitled to have my salute returned."

Automatically I lifted my hand to my head in a lame imitation of a salute. "You gone battle-happy, Earl?" I said.

"No, sir. And I think the contents of that envelope will explain everything, *if the Lieutenant would open it.*"

Still staring at him, uncomprehending, I tore the thing open and at last my eyes focused on the single sheet of paper: I had been awarded a battlefield commission; I was now a 2nd lieutenant in the Army of the United States.

On November 6, I started back to rejoin my outfit. By the time I reached them, the bloody battle of the "Lost Battalion" was over. My platoon, which had numbered 20 men when I left them only three days before, now had eleven GIs capable of carrying a weapon; and that included me.

When we were detached from the 86th Division and shipped to Nice, General Dahlquist sent an official letter of commendation:

"(1) The 36th Division regrets that the 442nd Combat Team must be detached and sent on other duties. The period during which you have served, October 14 to November 18, 1944, was one of hard, intense fighting through terrain as difficult as any

high and heavily-defended ridge. In the early evening, Captain Akins called the platoon leaders together and gave us our orders. All three rifle platoons were to be deployed, two moving up in a frontal attack, with my platoon assigned to skirt the left flank and come in from the side. Whichever one reached the heights first was to secure them against counter-attack, for momentum was vital.

I went back to my area and briefed the men. I watched them move off in isolated clusters, seeking some last moments of solitude before committing their bodies again to the fates of war. Many pulled out talismans which they felt, or maybe only hoped had guarded them through all the bloody months past: a St. Christopher medal, a Buddhist charm, a rusted .30 calibre bullet. Some fingered their *sen ninbari,* a piece of white cloth with 1,000 stitches, each of which, in the Japanese tradition, protected the wearer against 1,000 misfortunes. I remember old ladies standing on the street corners of Honolulu with *sen ninbaris* destined for their sons in the army, asking total strangers to sew in a stitch.

Was it all nonsense, a throwback to some pagan time when men did not realize that they could invoke the protection of an almighty God? Who knows? I only know that God was not neglected on that night of April 20. We prayed, deeply, devoutly. And I don't believe you can fault a man who is asked to face sudden death if he seeks a small measure of comfort in some earthly amulet.

The fact is that I had carried two silver dollars, won during my gambling heyday in Camp Shelby, through every campaign. But perhaps I had special reason to regard them as a lucky charm. One was bent and the other cracked almost in two from absorbing the impact of a German bullet during the Battle of Bruyères. Since I carried them in a breast pocket and wore a purple welt on my chest for two weeks after the incident, I had some grounds for believing they had done me some good.

And the further fact is that on this night of April 20, I was suddenly and acutely troubled because they had mysteriously disappeared. I searched the area as best I could in the darkness, and I asked around, but it was no use. Undoubtedly I had bent forward with my pocket unflapped and the coins had slipped out, to be unknowingly ground into the muddy earth by someone's boot.

I walked back to my tent, shivering a little for the night had grown cold. I fumbled through my pack for my field jacket, and *that* was gone. And I remembered: in the heat of the afternoon, miles to the south, I had put it on the ground beside me during a break, and when the break was over I had marched off and left it. I can call to mind the sad, sinking sensation that settled in the pit of my stomach. My brain commanded me to be sensible; so I'd lost a field jacket and two beat-up silver dollars; so what? But from the message center in my heart, I kept hearing forebodings of disaster.

I went over to First Sergeant Dan Aoki's tent and borrowed his camouflaged parka. I knew he treasured it and I promised to take good care of it. "But keep an eye on me," I said. "I have a feeling that tomorrow is not going to be one of my best days and you may have to peel it off my back."

He didn't laugh. He said, "You bring it back yourself or I don't want it."

We jumped off at first light. Off to the right, we could hear the crackle of rifle fire and an occasional machine gun burst as the 1st and 2nd platoons closed on the permeter of the German defenses. For us, though, it was like a training manual exercise. Everything worked I walked along directing artillery with my walkie-talkie. What little opposition we met, we outflanked or pinned down until someone could get close enough to finish them off with a grenade. We wiped out a patrol and a mortar observation post without really slowing down. As a result, we reached the western edges of the rise where the main line of resistance was anchored long before the frontal assault force. And we didn't mean to sit there and wait for them. We were right under the German guns, 40 yards from their bunkers and rocky defense positions, so close I had to call off our artillery. We had a choice of either moving up or getting the hell out of there.

We moved, hunching slowly up that slope that was so painfully devoid of cover, and almost at once three machine guns opened up on us. I can still smell that piece of unyielding ground under my face, and hear the *w-hiss* of the bullets tearing the air above my helmet. I lay there for a second, thinking about how neatly they had pinned us here and wondering how long it would take them to get us all if we just lay there hugging the earth. Then I pulled

a grenade from my belt and got up. Somebody punched me in the side, although there wasn't a soul near me, and I sort of fell backward. Then I counted off three seconds as I ran toward that angry splutter of flame at the mouth of the nearest machine gun. I threw the grenade and it cleared the log bunker and exploded in a shower of dust and dirt and metal, and when the gun crew staggered erect I cut them down with my tommy gun. I heard my men pounding up the hill behind me and I waved them toward the left where the other two nests were adjusting their field of fire to cover the whole slope.

"My God, Dan," someone yelled in my ear, "you're bleeding! Get down and I'll get an aid man!"

I looked down to where my right hand was clutching my stomach. Blood oozed wet between the fingers. I thought: *That was no punch, you dummy. You took a slug in the gut.*

I wanted to move on; we were pinned down now and the moment was crucial. Unless we stirred, unless we did something quickly, they'd pick us off one at a time. And I knew it was up to me. I lurched up the hill. I lobbed two grenades into the second emplacement before the riflemen guarding it ever saw me. But I had fallen to my knees. Somehow they wouldn't lock and I couldn't stand and I had to pull myself forward with one hand. Someone was hollering, "Come on, you guys, go for broke!" And hunched over, they charged up into the full fire of the third machine gun. And I was so fiercely proud of those guys I wanted to cry.

Then they had to drop and seek protection from the deadly stutter of that last gun. Some of them tried to crawl closer but hadn't a prayer. And all the time I was shuffling my painful way up on the flank of the emplacement, and at last I was close enough to pull the pin on my last grenade. And as I drew my arm back, all in a flash of light and dark I saw him, that faceless German, like a strip of motion picture film running through a projector that's gone berserk. One instant he was standing waist-high in the bunker, and the next he was aiming a rifle grenade at my face from a range of ten yards. And even as I cocked my arm to throw, he fired and his rifle grenade smashed into my right elbow and exploded and all but tore my arm off. I looked at it, stunned and unbelieving. It dangled there by a few bloody shreds of tissue, my

grenade still clenched in a fist that suddenly didn't belong to me any more.

It was that grenade that burst into my consciousness, dispelling the unreality of that motion picture in my brain, and the shock of that astounding and spectral moment in time. The grenade mechanism was ticking off the seconds. In two, three or four, it would go off, finishing me and the good men who were rushing up to help me.

"Get back!" I screamed, and swung around to pry the grenade out of that dead fist with my left hand. Then I had it free and I turned to throw and the German was reloading his rifle. But this time I beat him. My grenade blew up in his face and I stumbled to my feet, closing on the bunker, firing my tommy gun left-handed, the useless right arm slapping red and wet against my side.

My men were running up on both sides of the emplacement. It was almost over. But some last German, in his terminal instant of life, squeezed off a final burst from the machine gun and a bullet caught me in the right leg and threw me to the ground and I rolled over and over down the hill.

There was a crowd of men around me and someone was saying, "Let's carry him back," and they were grabbing at my legs but I kicked free.

"Get back up that hill!" I said in a voice that didn't sound remotely like mine. "Nobody called off the war! I want you to set up defensive positions and hold until the rest of the outfit gets here! Report back when you're all set. Get me a casualty report as soon as you can! Now get moving!"

And so they left me there, all alone with what used to be my arm, until the medic came. I asked him to cut the arm off, but he paled and said he couldn't. Instead, he gave me a shot of morphine so that soon I quit wanting to scream out in pain, and before I could stop him he'd slit the 1st sergeant's beautiful jacket clear up the side. Then he finally managed to get a tourniquet around the stump. "I'll get a couple of men and we'll carry you out of here," he said.

"I'm staying until the rest of the outfit gets here," I said. "I'm okay. You go look after some of the others."

It didn't take long. Captain Akins was among the first to find

me. He said I'd be okay, I'd be fine, and I said sure I would, and realized for the first time that whatever else I was going to be, I was surely not going to be a doctor, not with one arm.

I sent for my platoon sergeant, Gordon Takasaki. "You're boss now, Gordie," I told him, "the new platoon leader. Now listen to me. This thing is going to be over soon—a week, a month, soon. Take care of yourself and take care of the men. Don't let anybody get knocked off so close to the end. Understand?"

Dan Aoki came by as they were loading me onto a litter. A lot of men were watching. "So long, Dan," they called.

"I'm sorry about your jacket, Sarge," I said.

"I'll take it out of your hide, Lieutenant." But I noticed that he was crying.

Then they carried me down off that hill. And all the way down I could hear men calling, "So long, Dan."

It was April 21. The German resistance in our sector ended on April 23. Nine days later, the war in Italy was over and a week after that, the enemy surrendered unconditionally.

A LONG WAY HOME

AT the battalion aid station, they fished as much dirt and shrapnel as they could out of my arm and just whistled when they saw the body wound: the bullet had gone in near the right side and come out a slug's width from my spine. Then they put a "Morphine" tag on me, gave me another shot and trundled me into an ambulance for the trip to the field hospital.

Someone came around and showed me a bottle of blood. It had a name on it—Thomas Jefferson Smith, 92nd Division—and while they were rigging it for transfusion into my left arm, I thought how funny that was, showing me the blood, like a waiter displaying the label on a bottle of wine for your approval. And because I was to have 17 transfusions that first week, half of them who'e blood, I had plenty of opportunity to find out that it wasn't funny at all. A lot of that blood was collected from the 92nd Division itself, and it was shown to the recipient, without comment, as silent evidence that fighting men did more than fight, that they cared enough about each other and the men assigned to their sector to donate their blood against that time when somebody, maybe the guy in the next foxhole, would need it to sustain life. And as I thought about the all-Negro 92nd Division and looked at those names—Washington, Woodrow Wilson Peterson—it dawned on me that I was being pumped full of Negro blood. I am very, very grateful for it, and wish I could personally thank every man who donated it for me.

Sometime after that first transfusion, I guess they did give me a whiff of something because I remember floating off in that sky-rocketing darkness for a long time. It must have been the next day before I checked in again. I was in an enormous ward and still another doctor was looking me over as though I were a fugitive from the law of averages. "How do you feel, Lieutenant?" he said in a melancholy tone. He was a very young captain.

"Not too bad. Did they cut my arm off?"

"No, no. They . . . uh . . . just . . ."

"You mean they're going to save it?" Now he looked as though he wanted to run off and hide. I tried twisting around for a look

at my arm but it was under the covers and I hadn't the strength for an extended search. "Look, sir, I want you to tell me what the score is. Did they cut it off or not?"

You could just see him struggling to get a grip on himself. He was really very young. "They couldn't cut it off," he said. "It's turned gangrenous and they'll have to treat that and then sort of build up your strength before . . . they can proceed."

I closed my eyes. So that was that. From now on they could call me Lefty. I think that was the first moment I thought of myself as an amputee. But it's a funny thing—neither then, nor during all the long months of rehabilitation, did I consider myself a cripple or an invalid. It just never became part of my thinking. It isn't part of my thinking today.

In a few days, I suppose when they became reasonably convinced that I wasn't going to die after all, I was transferred back to the general hospital at Leghorn. And it was there, on May 1, Lei Day in Hawaii, that the gangrene was sufficiently checked so that they could amputate my right arm. It wasn't an emotionally big deal for me. I knew it was coming off and, in fact, had stopped thinking of it as belonging to me for some time. But acceptance and rehabilitation are entirely different things. I had adjusted to the shock *before* the operation. My rehabilitation began almost immediately afterward.

I was staring at the ceiling in the afternoon of my first day as an amputee when a nurse came by and asked if I needed anything. "A cigarette would go pretty good," I said.

"Yes, surely." She smiled and walked off, returning in a few minutes with a fresh pack of Camels. "Here you are, Lieutenant," she said, still smiling, and neatly placed the whole pack on my chest and went on her merry way.

For a while I just stared at it. Then I fingered it with my left hand, trying to decide how I'd go about it if I *did* decide to have a fling at opening it with one hand. I mean, have *you* ever tried opening a pack of cigarettes with one hand?

I sneaked a look around the ward to see if there was anyone in shape to help me, but everyone seemed to be at least as badly off as I was: This was obviously *not* the ward reserved for officers afflicted with athlete's foot and charley horses. Then I began pawing at that cursed pack, holding it under my chin and trying to

rip it open with my fingernails. It kept slipping away from me and I kept trying again, sweating in my fury and frustration as freely as if I'd been on a forced march. In fifteen minutes, I'd torn the pack and half the cigarettes in it to shreds, but I'd finally gotten one between my lips. Which is when I realized that that bitch of a nurse hadn't brought me any matches.

I rang the bell and she came sashaying in, still smiling, still trailing that aura of good cheer that made me want to clout her one. "I need a light," I said.

"Oh," she said prettily. "Of course you do." She pulled a pack of matches out of her pocket—she had had them all the time, the dumb broad!—and carefully put them in my hand. And she strolled off again!

If I had obeyed my first instinct I'd have bellowed after her with rage. If I'd obeyed my second instinct, I'd have burst out crying. But let's face it, I was a big boy now, an officer, and I just couldn't let some female Sadsack get the best of me. I just couldn't.

So I started fooling around with the matches. I clutched them and pulled them and twisted them and dropped them, and I never came remotely close to tearing one free, let alone getting it lit. But by this time I had decided that I'd sooner boil in oil before asking *her* for anything again. So I just lay there, fuming silently, and having extremely un-Christian thoughts about that angel of mercy, Miss Whatever-the-hell-her-name-was.

I was on the verge of dozing off when she came around again, *still smiling*. "What's the matter, Lieutenant?" she purred. "Have you decided to quit smoking? It's just as well . . . cigarettes make you cough and . . ."

"I couldn't get the damned thing lit."

She tsk-tsked at her thoughtlessness and sat gracefully on the edge of my bed. "I should have realized," she said, taking the mangled matches from me. "Some amputees like to figure it out for themselves. It gives them a feeling of—well, accomplishment. You know. But it doesn't matter. There'll be lots of things you'll be learning for yourself. We only give you the start."

I just gaped at her. I didn't even *know* what she was talking about. A start on what? Who needed her? "Look," I growled, "just light the cigarette, will you? I've been three hours trying to get this thing smoked."

"Yes, I know." Nothing ruffled her. Absolutely nothing. "But you see, I won't be around to light your cigarette all the time. You can't depend on other people. Now you have only one hand with which to do all the things that you used to do with two hands. And you have to learn how. We'll start with the matches, all right?"

And damned if she didn't open the cover, bend a match forward, close the cover, flick the match down and light it—all with one hand, all in a split second.

"See?" she said.

"Yes," I whispered.

"Now let's see you do it."

I did it. I lit the cigarette. And all at once her smile wasn't objectionable at all. It was lovely. I wish I could remember her name—I'll never forget her face—but all I remember is that she came from Eagle Pass, Texas, and as far as I was concerned she was the best damn nurse in the United States Army. In a single moment she had made me see the job that lay ahead of me, and in all the weeks that followed she found a thousand subtle ways to help me master it. And in the year and a half that it took me to become a fully functioning citizen again, no one ever did anything more important for me than that nurse did on that afternoon in Leghorn when she showed me how to light a cigarette, the afternoon my rehabilitation began.

In early July, I was checked out of the hospital at Leghorn. The next stop was Naples and some more fancy surgery to close up the flap on my arm. Two or three operations later—it was the end of July—I was ready to go back to the States, destination: Miami, Florida. It was a great thrill, that moment when they told me, but it wasn't the same as it must have been for other GIs. Home for me was Hawaii, and I knew that I faced more surgery and many months of rehabilitation before I could go home. Still, it was a long step in the right direction and every new tangible token of the U.S.A. went straight to my heart.

I was assigned to Atlantic City for my twenty-month long stateside rehabilitation. Atlantic City was wonderful. I suppose the fact that it was so near the ocean gave it a special appeal to me. And beyond that, there was hardly anything you could tell the people who ran the place about the care and feeding of human

beings. And there was a lot to be said for the facilities. Instead of a hospital, we were installed in one of those luxury hotels taken over by the government early in the war. Instead of a ward, we were assigned three-man suites. All in all, it beat the stuffing out of a slit trench on Mt. Nebbione in the Italian Apennines.

But of course it wasn't the opulence of the quarters that made this time in my life so meaningful. Nor was it the fact that I learned to function, to be as self-sufficient with one arm as I'd been with two. It was, quite simply, that over the next twenty months this bristle-edged roughneck of an infantry officer was transformed into something resembling a gentleman. Me, a gentleman!

And it was no accident. I was a Pygmalion project, Operation Eliza Doolittle. Some of my hew *haole* buddies at the hospital decided they were going to buff the jagged corners off the kid from Moiliili who pretended to know all there was to know about anything worth knowing—but still broke into pidgin-English when he got excited; who had been in some of the best restaurants in the world's most *sophisticated cities—and was still more comfortable* with chopsticks than with a knife and fork; whose idea of a stimulating evening was a high stakes crap game; and whose favorate before-, during-, and after-dinner beverage was 3.2 beer, and keep it coming! As you can see, there was a lot of raw material to work with and any civilizing contribution my new mentors could make had to be a distinct improvement.

For the first time I really came to understand *haoles* as people. I mean, let's face it, you eat and sleep and learn with a bunch of guys, and help change the dressings on their amputated arms and legs, and pretty soon you don't even notice that their eyes are shaped differently from yours. What you do notice is that they're people, the same as you are, with a set of worries and joys that pretty much match your own.

And then, of course, they went to work ironing out those irritating *little differences that I'd brought from Moiliili. Like the fact* that I couldn't make a "th" sound to save myself. "Hey dere," I'd say, "what's dat?"

One officer who had his M.S. in English once held a mirror up to my little idiosyncrasies of pronunciation, and I didn't like what I saw. "Dat," he said to me, bearing down heavily on each word,

blame on anybody. I don't even really care about all that stuff that happened before. What I'm interested in is tomorrow. I want my kids to have every break. I demand it!"

And little by little I began to appreciate what he was talking about. There seemed to be inherent in every American of Oriental descent a certain subtle sense of inferiority.

What Sakae was saying, and what I came to believe with all my heart and soul, was that the time had come for us to step forward. We had fought for that right with all the furious patriotism in our bodies and now we didn't want to go back to the plantation. Times were changing. The old patterns were breaking down. We wanted to take our full place in society, to make the greatest contribution of which we were capable, not for Hawaii's Japanese-Americans, but for Hawaii.

In time, I came to think that I could direct my best effort toward these ends as a lawyer. Nor did I ever envision myself studying law so I could defend the needy and protect the rights of the hard-pressed. From the first, I thought about the law in its purest sense, the law of the land. I wanted to help make the laws. I wanted to become a lawyer so I could go into politics.

Nothing I can possibly say would be an exaggeration of the importance of those talks Sakae and I had. In my mind, there came a gradual gathering together of past and future. History was no longer a catalogue of old heroes and stirring events. It was the shape and real problems and the concern of the very human men who wrestled with them. The things that happened in Hawaii in these next years of promise and change would be the history my children learned in school, and it would mark their lives, and their children's lives, for better or for worse.

I was finally discharged, as fully restored as the army's best efforts could make me, in May 1947. Arriving in Hawaii I had called from the terminal—"Hello, Papa, I'm sorry to wake you up, but I'm at Hickam Field and I'll be there in twenty minutes"—and now as I stood outside the house in the still, deserted street I suddenly couldn't believe it. Was I really home? Had all those incredible things happened to me in the more than two and a half years that had passed since I last saw this place? Then the door opened and light poured into the dark street and my mother was saying, "Ken?"

I had my arm around her and felt her tears. I had my arm around all of them, my father, my sister May who had been a child when I left and was now grown and beautiful, my brothers John and Robert flushing with embarrassment and the pride plain in their faces. It was a sublimely happy moment, that homecoming, those few first minutes when we dispelled the long years with our joy and gratitude.

CHAPTER VI

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

In 1924, the year I was born, Americans of Japanese ancestry made up a bare five per cent sliver of Hawaii's voting population. Less than twenty-three years later, when I was finally discharged from the army and came home to stay, the *nisei* were the largest single voting bloc in the islands, having accounted for three out of every ten ballots cast in the previous year's election. They spurred no social upheaval with their votes then, the usual comfortable Republican majorities were returned to the Territorial legislature, but one could hardly help feeling a certain stir in that postwar spring. There were more Oriental names in the House of Representatives. Good solid Chinese and Japanese families were moving into the better neighborhoods, and the *haoles* were making room for them without a murmur. Hawaii seemed at a turning point in history, gathering breath as it made ready to push off in directions never before imagined. One could almost feel the ferment of impending change. A quiet revolution was brewing and it was an exciting time to be alive.

Once I was back to normal living, the first thing I did was register for classes at the University. I remember talking with my old friend and teacher Dr. Hamre, and how hard it was for him to accept the fact that I was giving up my dream of medicine. "You'd make a fine internist, Dan," he said, "or a *radiologist*. There are any number of branches of medicine in which you don't need . . ."

The poor man's voice trailed off in embarrassment and I had to help him: ". . . two hands? Sure, your're right, sir, but you know how it's always been for me. A surgeon or nothing." We stood there awkwardly for a moment, then I said, "Anyway, I feel compensated. I *want* to be a lawyer. When I was a kid I used to go to sleep thinking about all the sick people I was going to help. Now I think about all the people and *all* their problems, and I'm not worried about not having enough to do."

I worked hard at my pre-law courses and got good, though not spectacular grades. I was elected to the Student Council and was active in the 442nd Veterans Club and eventually served as a two-

term commander of the Disabled American Veterans Oahu chapter.

In the summer of 1947, I was signed up as a member of the Democratic party by that onetime police captain, John Burns, who, in those dangerously tense days after Pearl Harbor, had publicly expressed his confidence in Hawaii's Japanese-American community. In a time when most people—and many officials—were loudly worrying about the Islands' security because of the "foreign" element in our midst, Jack Burns wrote a letter to the newspaper declaring that he wasn't worried at all. In his capacity as a police officer, he said, and as the man charged with responsibility for civilian intelligence matters, he had yet to see or hear anything that would lessen his full faith in the loyalty of Hawaii's Americans of Japanese descent. It is difficult now to fully understand how much courage it took for an official to make such a statement in those nervous days after Pearl Harbor was bombed. But the *nisei* understood, and they remembered, and their feeling of aloha for Jack Burns runs strong to this day.

Now it was 1948 and Jack Burns, who did understand, was retired from the police force and active in politics. In fourteen years he would be Governor of the State of Hawaii, but anyone who might have made such a prediction in 1948 would have been led off to have his head examined. Apart from the Republicans' customary prosperity at the polls, the Democratic Party seemed in an unusually bleak state of despair.

Even my more broad-minded friends were concerned when they heard I'd cast my lot with this ragtag outfit. "Think about your future, Dan," they said. "If you have to get involved in politics, why don't you join the Republicans?"

"Because I don't believe in their principles."

"Oh, come on, buddy, what's the difference between them, except that the Republicans are in and the Democrats never will be?"

This argument always irritates me. I happen to believe that there is a deep and fundamental difference between the two major parties in our country, and I don't think I've ever crystallized it better than when I told my friends, "The difference between them is that the Republicans' chief concern is property, things, what we own; the Democrats worry about people—what we are."

I don't know if I convinced them, but I didn't much care. Politics was all new to me, supercharged with excitement—a real-life game in which the stakes were the ideas and people you believed in—and I knew from the very beginning that I was in it to stay.

There was a girl. My parents knew her parents and I had seen her around college—she was an instructor or something—but I hadn't ever met her. Then in the winter of 1947, a week before Thanksgiving, someone introduced us and, in the unlikeliest circumstances, I promptly decided that I was going to marry her. I don't think the possibility of marriage had ever even occurred to me before that moment, but afterward it never left my mind. Everything I had and wanted to have suddenly became absolutely meaningless unless Margaret Awamura would share it with me.

I proposed on our second date and we had a long and happy courtship. It was a rare day when we didn't see each other and no day passed without at least one long telephone conversation between us. The most insignificant happenings took on a certain importance when we talked about them—*because* we talked about them—and in sudden innocence we unraveled our innermost thoughts and memories so that the experiences of one became a part of the other. We never formally announced our intentions to our parents. Mine became first to know when I asked Maggie to go to church with us one Sunday. All the family had their turn at sneaking sideways looks at her, all but my mother who paid strict attention, as always, to the service. But later, when I had taken Maggie home, it was Mother who put their speculation into words.

"It is one thing to take a girl dancing," she said. "It is another to take her to church. You must be serious about her."

"I am. I'm going to marry her, Mother."

Her eyes crinkled with gladness and she reached up to hug me. "May you both have long days, and happy ones," she said. "She is a lovely girl."

My father shook my hand, there were some jokes from my brothers and sister. Then they got down to brass tacks. Was Margaret a Methodist? Mother wanted to know. Had I spoken to her father? Had we chosen a wedding date?

I began working my way through the answers: Margaret had been raised a Congregationalist, but would be happy to become a member of my church. I had not spoken to her father; the

Awamuras, in fact, had no knowledge of our intentions. As for a wedding date, we had decided to wait until I finished my junior year the following June.

Now my father took over: "In order for this to be done properly, we must choose someone to discuss the terms of the marriage with a representative of the Awamura house."

"You mean a . . . a go-between?" I yelped, horrified.

"Of course. It would be considered insulting for you to presume to ask for her hand directly." He firmly shushed my agitated protest before I got it out fully. "Daniel, this is a tradition among our people. It does you no harm and it will please the Awamuras and the Inouyes. Shall we consider it settled?"

"Yes, sure," I muttered and sank back in my chair.

I'll say this about the ultra-formal and stylized way of arranging a wedding among people of Japanese descent: they must be doing something right, for their divorce rate is among the world's lowest. For our go-between—called *nakaodo* in Japanese—we chose the Yasumoris, pillars of the church and dear old family friends. The Awamuras choices were also eminently respected members of the community, Dr. and Mrs. Kohatsu. On the appointed evening, the Inouye team—and we were quite a contingent, Mr. and Mrs. Yasumori, my parents and myself—appeared at the Awamuras' home on the stroke of eight. We brought the traditional gifts of rice, sake and fish, and we took our places on the floor in the traditional way, the Yasumoris and the Kohatsus facing each other from opposite sides of a low table. Behind their respective *nakaodos* sat the Inouyes and the Awamuras, and farthest away from the action, as though we were only incidental onlookers, sat Maggie and I. Now and then I caught her eye and we smiled secretly. Only the *nakaodos* spoke.

First the gifts were exchanged. Then Mr. Yasumori began to extol the virtues of one Daniel Ken Inouye—he was a fine, upstanding young man from a good family, a war hero now studying very hard for an honorable profession—and I had to concentrate to remember that he was talking about me.

The Kohatsus accepted this intelligence impassively—the Awamuras looked as though they were pretending not to have heard—and then our side listened to the recitation of Maggie's qualities: she had earned a master's degree, was so accomplished

a seamstress that she made all her own clothes, and her family's reputation for honor was unimpeachable. I wanted very much to add that on top of all that she was beautiful, but I held my peace.

Now the *nakaodos* consulted briefly with their clients, presumably recommending that the engagement be made. Then Mr. Yasumori passed to Dr. Kohatsu the ring I had bought wrapped in plain paper "We would like to offer this as a gift," he said solemnly.

Dr. Kohatsu nodded, took the ring and passed back a small gift that represented the dowry. Glasses were filled, a toast was drunk—and Maggie and I were officially engaged.

We invited 300 people to the wedding and 450 showed up. This surprised nobody since, in Japanese custom, an invitation addressed to the head of the household automatically included the whole family. Many of our friends were too poor to own suits and came in sport shirts and slacks. But that did absolutely nothing to mar the dignity of the ceremony or the happiness of the reception. The Reverend Hiro Higuchi who, as a chaplain in 442nd had been so close to me in the war, officiated. That took a little doing since he was a Congregationalist and Maggie and I wanted to be married in the Harris Memorial Methodist Church. But a talk with the church fathers straightened that out and Reverend Higuchi was able to marry us.

When our honeymoon was over, we came back to a little apartment and settled down to the hard work of getting me educated and lined up for a law degree. That had absolutely *top priority*. But although I was only able to contribute $33 to our joint savings account, the GI Bill of Rights and my army retirement pay made me almost a self-supporting husband. Of course it was Maggie's salary as a teacher at the university that saw us through those years, and quite a few to follow.

Our life was full but not placid. Politics became an integral part of it almost from the day we returned from our honeymoon. I went to weekly political meetings, meetings that went on for hour after interminable hour, and came tiptoeing home at two or three in the morning. I don't say it was fair, but Maggie understood, bless her, that for me, it was necessary.

By the time I graduated in 1950, I had pretty well decided that I wanted to study law at George Washington University. It had a certain ring to it, and two years in the nation's capital, the ulti-

mate goal of all political activity, would surely enrich my understanding of the profession to which I meant to dedicate my life. To satisfy my ego, I made application, too, to Harvard, Michigan and Columbia law schools. Since I was definitely going to George Washington if they'd have me, that was a lot of extra work. But when I got letters of acceptance from all four, I felt it was worth all the work. Man's ego is like that.

In late summer, Maggie and I sailed for the mainland on the *Lurline*, the same proud ship that had carried a couple of thousand jammed-together, wide-eyed *nisei* to their great adventure—was it already eight years ago? This trip was considerably different. Although we could afford only a small cabin, the warm present and the promise of what lay ahead were very much with us and we savored every hour.

I worked very hard. After a semester or two of planting my feet firmly in the good solid ground of the law, I even pulled down a couple of A grades and became a member of the board of editors of the *Law Review* and had some of my briefs published. Soon I was invited to join Phi Delta Phi, an international legal fraternity which counted among its members supreme court justices and most of the faculty of the law school. It was a signal honor, heightened a year later when I was elected exchequer of the George Washington chapter.

One of my ventures from the classroom was more directly related to the world of politics. One day I went to the office of the Democratic National Committee and volunteered my services in any capacity they felt might be useful. I told them I wanted no pay, only the experience of working close to the grass roots, of learning enough so that when I went back to Hawaii I could bring something more than just my amateur standing and a brand new law degree. I remember that it took a long time for their initial astonishment to melt into curiosity, and finally into real interest.

"You mean," one of them said, "that you want to go back and rebuild the Democratic party?"

"Not quite," I said. "There was never anything to rebuild. All we're trying to do for a starter is to give Hawaii some semblance of a two-party system."

They took me on, and from that day until I graduated and left Washington I haunted that place. I was there almost every hour I

could spare, making charts, writing reports, running out for coffee and listening, always listening. After a couple of months, they realized that unlike most "volunteers," I didn't get bored or discouraged by the pettiness of some of the jobs that needed doing, that I made no complaints and that I really had come to learn. And so, little by little, they worked me into the second echelon of the hierarchy, permitting me to sit in on strategy meetings, publicity planning meetings, fund-raising meetings. Still I listened, said very little and learned a great deal. The principles were the same —like the number of plots that can be used in a novel, there are only so many basic political tactics—but the refinements of those principles! The refinements were the difference between the winners and the candidates who also ran.

In my last year, I divided my free time equally between political headquarters and the Congressional galleries. I was fascinated by the Hill, by the intricacies of parliamentary procedure and debate. There, right in front of me, were the elected representatives of all the people of this land, the stars, the duds, the tacticians, the operators, the statesmen, each in his own way going about the business of attending to the legislative business of the United States. I never saw myself down on the floor of the House or the Senate in those days; the limit of my ambition then was a seat in the Territorial legislature, I suppose. But I think that even then I understood the political process and its application to our democracy, for those men to me represented not the sordid machinations of the backroom bosses, but the end result of our representative form of government. Some states were represented by abler men than other states, and this was because some people cared more and worked harder.

I was graduated in September 1952, with a J.D. degree, different from the usual LL.B. in that it marked some extra courses I had taken and my service on the *Law Review*. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to wait for the graduation exercises. As a matter of fact I left before the final grades were posted because now the important thing for me was to get back to Hawaii and begin studying for my bar examinations.

I returned to Hawaii armed with a law degree—although it wouldn't be worth much until I'd passed the Territorial bar exam —a little practical experience in stateside politics and a fierce

desire to get back to work for the Democratic party and the people of Hawaii. And there was plenty to do. Besides the day-in, day-out job of recruiting new members and maintaining the enthusiasm of the old ones, a group of us—John Burns, Sakae Takahashi and a few others—had come to the conclusion that one of the ways we could give meaningful help to Hawaii's small shopkeepers and wage-earners was to organize a new bank. Of the four banks then doing business in the Islands, two were run by the big companies and were hardly sympathetic to the needs of the plain people, while the other two were so small that they were in no real position to offer assistance.

The bank application was approved and that scrawny little infant we brought into the world that spring of 1953 is now a robust $72 million giant, and still dedicated to the original principle: helping the man who needs, not a couple of million dollars to finance a merger, but enough to buy a few hundred dollars worth of stock for a new store, or to tide him over between jobs. Although I have suggested resigning from the board of directors because, as a public official, I cannot participate in the bank's business, I have always been cheerfully refused.

As for the bar exam, Maggie and I received the happy word in August; I had passed and was free to hang out my shingle and begin practicing the law. But of course my heart was in politics. I had studied law to help me be a better practicing politician. In a sense, everything I had done in life pointed me toward that goal. I saw it—and still see it—as a thoroughly decent and worthwhile profession, a chance for men of goodwill to offer genuine service. I have often expressed the wish that our universities institute courses in the art of practical politics so that men of high caliber are attracted to this vital area of government service, and so that the bleak picture of the hack and the ward heeler are erased from the American consciousness.

Not that images mattered to me. I knew then, as I know now, that as long as people wanted me, I was in politics to stay. Nor did I even have a chance to hang out a shingle. The day after I passed the bar exam, Mayor Johnny Wilson, one of a handful of exceptional democrats to succeed at the polls, called me into his office and appointed me assistant prosecutor for the city and county of Honolulu. I took charge of my first case that very afternoon.

CHAPTER VII

A RECKONING IN BALLOTS

WE believed there was a chance that 1954 could be our year. Ever since the war we had been whittling away at the absolute dominance of the huge Republican majority in the legislature. Now there was a certain promise in the air, a secret and contagious spirit that whispered, "Go for broke!" This year. Now!

Again we nominated John Burns for Delegate. I was named his campaign chairman and my first statement to our people was a request for anybody who thought we were just going through the motions again to roll up their voters list and sit this one out. We meant to win this time, I said, not only the Delegateship, but control of the Territorial House and Senate, as well.

That summer, at a meeting at Dan Aoki's house, Jack Burns dropped his bombshell. We were discussing likely candidates and overall strategy when Burns, who usually sits quietly absorbing every word and intonation—but has only to clear his throat to gain everyone's attention—suddenly spoke up: "Dan, I think it's time for you to run."

"Listen," I said, "why me? There are other guys who have been around longer, better qualified . . ."

"Because you can win," Burns said.

"In the Fourth District?" I thought he was kidding or crazy. In Hawaii's whole experience with representative government, only two Democrats had ever been elected from the old Fourth District, where I lived.

But he wasn't crazy, and he certainly wasn't kidding. "Who was it that made the big speech about going through the motions?" he asked quietly. "Who is it that keeps saying times are changing and that the people want a chance to come out from under 54 years of Republican rule? That was you, Dan, and this is your chance to prove you believe it."

I looked around at the impassive faces. I wanted to tell them that I did believe it, that my only concern was me: who would vote for Dan Inouye? I wasn't even thirty years old, had never been a candidate for an elective office and felt numbingly unready. I wanted to run, sure—but now?

Dan Aoki spoke up. I respected Dan. Everyone did. He had been a 442nd first sergeant, was now president of the Veterans Club and knew as much about the needs and hopes of the ex-GIs as anyone around. "They'll go for you, Dan," he said. You've got the right combination—a war hero, a fresh face. If we want the vets to come into the Democratic party, we've got to give them somebody they care about, one of their own. You."

"You're on," I said to them. "I'll do it. And I'll give it everything I've got."

That night I discussed it all with Maggie. "Go ahead, Dan," she said. "If you think you're ready for this, I'll be happy to be on your side and working for your election."

1954 was the year of the eager young hopefuls, better-educated, thanks to the G.I. Bill, unscarred by past election defeats, and all abrim with vigorous, forward-looking ideas about the management of the Territorial government. In the Fourth District, until this campaign a permanent graveyard for the Democratic hopes, four of our six candidates were veterans and included persons of Japanese, Portuguese, Caucasian and Hawaiian descent. Let me say a word about them:

Spark Matsunaga, war hero with the 100th Battalion, lawyer and now the senior member of the Hawaiian delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Masato Doi, member of the 442nd, soon to become chairman of the city council for the city and county of Honolulu, then to be appointed a circuit judge by Jack Burns

Russell Kono, a war vet who fought in the China-Burma-India theater with Merrill's Marauders, a successful lawyer and now a magistrate.

Anna Kahanamoku, sister-in-law of Hawaii's beloved swimming champion, Duke Kahanamoku, had been a physical education instructor at Washington Intermediate School when I went there, a beautiful, gracious woman of Hawaiian-Portuguese-Caucasian ancestry who has since been chairman of the board of education and served in the Hawaiian state senate.

Daniel K. Inouye, now a United States Senator.

William Crozier, a long-time Democrat and one of the only two ever elected from the old Fourth District, the only one among the six of us who would fail to win in that crucial election.

This gives some indication of the caliber of our team. There were other straws in the wind. In one speech, I suggested that the best way for the electorate to make a judgment between the two parties was for every Republican candidate to get up on the platform with his Democratic opponent and debate the issues face to face. I even took a deep breath and said we'd foot the bill for radio time, although our treasury still suffered from chronic anemia. This, of course, was six years before the Kennedy-Nixon debates revived interest in this time-honored style of campaigning—and the point was that the Republicans didn't even respond to the invitation. Even if some of our own people hadn't yet realized it, our opponents had grown acutely aware that the day of the halfhearted Democratic way of battle—hula dancers, luaus, pretty balloons—had ended. We understood the issues and were prepared to talk about them—education, economic development, the kind of future Hawaii ought to aim for—and, more than anything else, this shook the Republicans' confidence.

The six of us running from the Fourth District campaigned as a team. Each of us had a particular issue—mine was education—on which we spent many after-midnight hours of study, but our central theme was progress, for all the people. We had played a small but vital part in the great war and now that it was won we were not about to go back to the plantation. We wanted our place in the sun, the right to participate in decisions that affected us. Day after day, at rally after rally, we hammered home the point that there must be no more second-class citizens in the Hawaii of tomorrow.

Then came the meeting at Ainahaina. Once again we had challenged the Republicans to a radio debate. Once again their reply was dead silence. But somewhere, at some strategy meeting, they must have faced up to the grim fact that we Democrats had a chance to win, and their reaction was that well-worn, John Wayne-to-rescue ploy, the "Truth Squad." So it was that the first of our speakers had been talking for about five minutes when, with a great flourish and determined air, in charged the "Truth Squad," their chairman grabbing the microphone to announce that they could no longer stand idly by while "these so-called Democrats" went on deceiving the people. He went right to the heart of what the "Truth Squad" had come to say: the Democratic party had

been captured by the I.L.W.U., we were the willing tools of I.L.W.U. leaders Harry Bridges and Jack Hall and hence, at the very least, soft on communism.

For a long and electric moment I just sat there, the words ringing in my ears, and the realization that this infamy was going out over the air numbing me: in the space of three minutes we had been lumped with Bridges and Hall, made out to be either fools or traitors, and I could see all our high hopes, all our back-breaking effort, going out the window. True or false, a political charge travels with the speed of light, while a denial moves at a snail's pace and most often doesn't catch up until the day after the polls close.

I remember getting to my feet and moving to the microphone. It wasn't my turn to speak and, truthfully, I had no idea in that instant what I meant to say or do. As a matter of fact, until I actually began talking, everything blurred in my eyes.

Once I heard the sound of my voice, all the ripples of faces in front of me stiffened into focus and became people. It was like the first instant of combat: one second you're scared to death, and the next you set out to do what needs to be done. I knew how desperately important it was that I win these people back, here and now, not tomorrow or next week when the smear had hardened to fact in their minds.

I put the notes for my speech into my clenched teeth and tore them in two with my only hand. I said that in my view the danger to our democratic institutions was less from communism than from the social conditions on which communists fed and flourished—poverty, slums, inequality of opportunity. These were the evils, the very real evils, that my fellow candidates and I were pledged to fight. If our opponents wanted to wage a shadow war, a smear campaign, that was their sad privilege.

"But I cannot help wondering," I said, "whether the people of Hawaii will not think it strange that the only weapon in the Republican arsenal is to label as communists men so recently returned from defending liberty on the firing lines in Italy and France. Let me speak for those of us who didn't come back—I *know* I speak for my colleagues on this platform, and for good Democratic candidates everywhere in these Islands—when I say that we bitterly resent having our loyalty and patriotism question-

ed by cynical political hacks who lack the courage to debate the real issues in this campaign."

I had never before called attention to my disability for the simple reason that I didn't consider it a qualification for public office. But at that moment, blinded with fury, coldly aware that I was engaging in a bit of demogoguery, I held up my empty right sleeve and shook it: "I gave this arm to fight fascists. If my country wants the other one to fight communists, it can have it!"

There was a moment of stunned silence, then a crashing of applause. A man ran to the edge of the platform and cried up at me: "It's about time somebody stood up to them!"

Arms waved, and handkerchieves, and sometime during that tumult, the Republican "Truth Squad" skulked off the platform—and with them went any chance they had to win the election. That was the turning point, and when the votes were counted a few weeks later, five of the six Democratic candidates running from the Fourth District were elected, a victory beyond our wildest imaginations. We had won 22 of the 30 seats in the House, and 10 of 15 in the Senate, besides gaining control of most of the city and county councils. My name led the ticket.

Even today, there are some good Democrats in Hawaii who would just as soon forget the session of the Territorial legislature that was called to order in February of 1955. It was wild, full of sound, fury and confusion and, if you were looking for a log of solid legislative achievement—well, I'd have to concede that you'd come to the wrong place.

Of the 22 members of the Democratic majority, only 8 had any legislative experience whatever. Most were young, burning to set right out redressing evil. We were convinced that our zeal would see us through, that because our hearts were pure and our aspirations lofty we would prevail. We believed in ourselves. Thanks to the GI Bill and the fact that most of us were vets, few legislative bodies anywhere in the country could boast the level of professional and educational competence that we brought to our task. But when it came to the ways and means, the give and take of practical politics, we were pretty much in the dark.

But if we didn't achieve the legislative revolution we were after, we did learn the greatest lesson of all—that politics is the art of the possible. And so armed we were infinitely more capable of

writing a significantly progressive record in the days ahead. Nor was that first session a total legislative loss. For me, it was not only a training ground (I served as majority leader), but a means of bringing influence to bear on some matters that, though they would never change the world, did correct some injustices that rankled many of us emotionally.

In the election of 1956, the Democratic majority in the House, though cut to 20, remained solid and substantial. It was now clear that 1954 was no freak and that we were a force to be reckoned with. Personally, I knew I'd learned a great deal in that freshman session—I bore plenty of scars from my lessons in human relations—and though the fire to reform still burned inside me, I knew how to go at the legislative process more patiently, and certainly more practically.

All this time, I was theoretically engaged in the private practice of law. But the fact was that my tax return for the first quarter of the year showed an income of precisely zero. I was simply too busy with my work in the legislature to seek out or properly represent any private clients. But Maggie, a girl of absolutely the rarest variety, never complained She knew I was happy and for her that was enough.

Not that we really suffered financially. Maggie had returned to the University to teach, and between her salary and my pension we managed to keep going. Of course once the legislative sessions ended, I did make a little money in private practice, and anyway, we liked stew, corned beef and cabbage and spaghetti.

In 1958, I made what I then thought would be the most important political decision ever offered to me. I decided to leave the House and run for the Territorial Senate. Now it must be understood that in our Islands there is a great prestige attached to the Senate. True or not, that body is popularly considered to be occupied by Hawaii's statesmen, and I sincerely felt that to be elected a Territorial Senator would cap my career and give me gratifying political work for the rest of my days.

Well, when the votes were counted it turned out that I led the ticket. I was a Senator. Of course I ran into a little difficulty at the very outset; backing the wrong man for President of the Senate, I found myself appointed chairman of the relatively obscure veterans affairs committee. But I didn't brood about it. I

was certainly interested in veterans, and maybe I could make the work of my committee more important. In any event, I was a happy man that year, certain I had achieved the limit of my political ambitions.

And then—statehood!

The matter of statehood for the Territory of Hawaii had been mentioned, rumored, discussed and shelved for many years. It would come some day, everyone said, and when Alaska began talking about statehood we in the Islands were even more encouraged. Surely, with our larger population and more viable economy, we would be taken into the union of states first. But though joint bills to admit both territories were introduced in Congress, still nothing happened.

Of course the opposition, both internal and on the mainland, was extremely potent. The people, by a 17-to-1 majority, had demonstrated in a referendum that they wanted to be a full and equal partner in the United States, but the tiny minority opposing it held very high cards. And their opposition was based on good and practical reasons—of their own.

But the power of the people, if they care and they persist, is, in the end, irresistible. The first significant step was the election of John Burns as Hawaii's Delegate to Congress in 1956. Jack pursued the dream of statehood along all the usual avenues and with all the customary diligence and rhetoric. And he was brought to a crashing dead stop by the steely opposition of powerful Southern congressmen. He listened to all the tiresome old arguments about noncontiguity and size and economic development, and he made all the standard answers—that Hawaii was ahead of many states in economic growth and population and statistically prepared for statehood years before. To no avail; for the real reason—expressed in remarks that never got into the *Congressional Record*, such as, "Sir, how would you like to be sitting in this chamber next to a Senator named Yamamoto?"—was neither numbers nor dollars but the fact that much of Hawaii's population was non-Caucasian and, in fact, heavily Japanese.

And faced with this grim truth, Jack Burns demonstrated a wisdom and political courage that ought to earn him a permanent place in the hearts of our people. He prevailed on the leaders to back him in withdrawing Hawaii from the statehood drive com-

pletely so that Alaska could have a clear shot at it.

His strategy was perfect. Alaska became the forty-ninth state in 1958, and during that vindictive election campaign in Hawaii, Jack Burns asked only one thing: send me back as your Delegate to Congress once more, and if the statehood bill for Hawaii fails to carry, I will disappear from the political scene and never return again.

And his essential faith in the Congress of the United States was not misplaced. With Alaska in, all the phony arguments about noncontiguity, population and economy were undercut. And the momentum generated by Alaska's drive overrode the opposition, and in March 1959, the U.S. Congress voted to accept Hawaii as the fiftieth state.

I will never forget that day. Burns telephoned the territorial legislature from Washington. "The roll call is still in progress," he said, "but we have the votes. We're in!"

It grew very quiet in the legislature when the announcement was made. This dream, this everlasting hope of nearly all of us in both parties, entailed too awesome a responsibility for anyone to feel like shouting in triumph in those first moments. The chaplain was called and led us in a prayer of thanksgiving. And that afternoon, both houses adjourned to go from Iolani Palace to Kawaihao Church, oldest in Hawaii and often called our Westminster Abbey, where the last of the Kamehamehas is buried.

When the emotional binge tapered off and leaders of both parties settled themselves to the hard work of transforming a territory into a state, they realized that there was a lot more to it than met the eye. A special election was to be held in July and the time was upon them to weigh candidates for the U.S. Senate and House, and for Governor and Lieutenant-Governor.

It was a testing time and I'd be less than honest if I said I didn't see myself somewhere in that brand new political picture. Since there were no incumbents, everyone was starting out on an equal basis. Certainly the votes I'd run up in past elections were encouraging enough to persuade me that I might have a chance at one of the top state offices.

The one I tentatively decided to try for was the U.S. House of Representatives. But in discussing it with associates and party officials, I found them all but unanimous in urging me to declare for

the Senate. Jack Burns was among those, although I knew that it was his own personal wish to go back to Washington as Senator. But nearly everyone in the party felt that it was more important that he run for Governor, and putting his own desires second, as always, he agreed.

I gave it some hard thought and came to the firm decision that I would give it a try. I withdrew my savings from the bank, borrowed $5,000, and my family pitched in some money on top of that. I ordered posters and bumper stickers—"Inouye for Senator"—and began planning my campaign.

At this point, only one other Democrat had declared for the Senate, a onetime marine named Frank Fasi, so the path to the nomination seemed fairly clear. About this time, a popular and articulate lady attorney, Mrs. Patsy Takemoto Mink, told me that she wanted to run for the Democratic nomination for the House. "I wouldn't do it if you were running against me, Dan," she said. "But if you're going for the Senate . . ."

"I think you'll make a great Congresswoman, Patsy," I assured her. "Good luck."

The next week, and within days of each other, two of the party's most distinguished elder statesmen announced their candidacy for the two Senate seats. William Heen had been the first Democratic president of the territorial senate, city attorney and judge, and was an outstanding political talent. Oren E. Long, then serving with me in the territorial senate, was a former governor and superintendent of public instruction. It was Oren Long, nearly 20 years before, who had handed me my high school diploma.

And now what was I supposed to do? In the next three weeks, I was forced to face up to three choices, each of which had repugnant aspects, and to make what I now *knew* to be the most fateful decision of my career.

I could stay in the Senate race against two men to whom the Democratic party owed everything and, incidentally, violate my own heritage which decreed a constant respect for honored elders.

I could run for the House of Representatives, despite a commitment that had already cost me a great sum of money and, much more to the point, despite the fact that I had all but given Patsy Mink a clear field by assuring her I was in the race for Senator.

Or I could completely withdraw from the federal elections, stifle what I honestly felt to be a chance at a larger contribution to Hawaii and the nation, and stay in the state legislature.

I discussed it with Maggie and my closest friends, but they could see how deeply all this was enmeshed with my future, with what I myself had to decide and do, and what could they say? I went to see Jack Burns, the closest thing to a political godfather that I'll ever have, and Jack looked me in the eye and said, "You're young, Dan. You'll have other chances. So will Patsy. This chance belongs to Long and Heen."

Not long after that I made my lonely decision.

I personally telephoned Governor Long, Judge Heen and several of the party leaders and invited them to "a private and important" luncheon at a Japanese teahouse. And finally, with all the arrangements made, I called Patsy Mink. I cut through the pleasantries as quickly as I could—the thing was bad enough without any additional hypocrisy.

"Patsy, I called to tell you that I'm withdrawing from the Senate race in favor of Governor Long and Judge Heen."

"Yes, Dan?" she said and, I'm sure, already knew what I had to say next.

"I'm going to announce my candidacy for the House of Representatives at 5 P.M. today."

There was an awful silence. I could almost feel her struggling between her natural, inevitable anger—that sense that she'd been betrayed—and her innate decency.

"Patsy, I'm sorry as hell it turned out this way. I didn't know Long and Heen would get in this thing. I meant it when I gave you my blessings."

"I know you did. I'm disappointed, but I think I understand."

"Thanks."

"Only I can't withdraw, Dan. Too many people have worked too hard for me to just pull out. So I guess we're in for a primary fight, you and I."

"There are lots of people I'd rather fight against," I told her. "But I promise you that as far as I'm concerned it will be the kind of campaign we can walk away from as friends."

So that was done. Then came the luncheon at which I informed the leaders. At 5 P.M., I made the news public and the reaction

was stunning, the front pages full of the story the next day. And then, almost at once, the campaign was under way.

I think it was pretty clear, even to Patsy, that I was ahead so it couldn't have been a very serious shock to her when I won the primary by a decisive margin. She showed her caliber immediately afterward by accouncing that she would support and work for me right up to election day. And nothing could have made me happier than when, five years later, I was able to back Patsy wholeheartedly for a seat in Congress, which she won and now fills with great skill and integrity.

My Republican opponent in that special election of 1959 was Dr. Charles Silva, a dentist from the Big Island, Hawaii, who had served capably in the state senate and won considerable popularity. The campaign was brief but extremely intense, and the outcome seemed clear from the moment the first returns began coming into our small headquarters on election eve. As early as 8:30 P.M., when it was obvious that I was going to roll up a huge majority, Dr. Silva gracefully conceded defeat and—it suddenly struck me with an enormous emotional impact—I was on my way to a place in the Congress of the United States.

Pandemonium had broken loose in the jam-packed headquarters. Movie and television cameramen tried to jostle their equipment around the reporters and well-wishers. Maggie clung to my hand, both of us deeply moved and sharply aware of the very special significance of this election: for the first time in the long history of the United States, an American of Japanese ancestry had been elected to the House of Representatives. And there were the questions shouted at me:

"How does it feel, Mr. Congressman?"

"What's the first thing you're going to do in Washington, Dan?"

"Any future political plans?"

When they had finally simmered down and I could make myself heard, I said that I regarded my victory as a very special gift from the people, a sacred privilege. "I would hope that my service in the Congress would be a bridge between the Western world and the Orient. I would like to convey to the Mainland some small sense of our spirit of aloha."

Three years later, when I was leaving the House to campaign for a seat in the U.S. Senate, Congressman Leo O'Brien reminisced

about the day I took my oath of office. O'Brien had been one of the most determined advocates of Hawaiian statehood in all the Congress. We had become good friends. But on that day when he stood up on the floor of the House to tell how I'd arrived on the national political scene, he had considerably more in mind than the usual intra-party back-patting. Let me quote from the *Congressional Record:*

"Tuesday last was the third anniversary of the admission of Hawaii. Today is the third anniversary of one of the most dramatic and moving scenes ever to occur in this House.

"On that day, a young man, just elected to Congress from the brand new state, walked into the well of the House and faced the late Speaker Sam Rayburn.

"The House was very still. It was about to witness the swearing in, not only of the first Congressman from Hawaii, but the first American of Japanese descent to serve in either House of Congress.

"'Raise your right hand and repeat after me,' intoned Speaker Rayburn.

"The hush deepened as the young Congressman raised not his right hand but his left, and he repeated the oath of office.

"There was no right hand, Mr. Speaker. It had been lost in combat by that young American soldier in World War II. Who can deny that, at that moment, a ton of prejudice slipped quietly to the floor of the House of Representatives."

Sam Rayburn was one of the great Americans of the twentieth century. Apart from his towering skills of statesmanship, he had an infinite regard for people, and the young Congressman on whom he turned a fatherly eye was very lucky indeed. I had been planning to call on him and pay my respects at the appropriate time, but only a few days after my arrival in Washington, the phone rang and that inimitable voice asked to speak to Congressman "Inn-oo-way, or Inn-way however you say it."

"This is he," I said.

"This is Speaker Rayburn. I thought if you weren't too busy you might come around to see me."

"Yes, sir!" I said, and practically ran to his office.

He said he wanted to welcome me personally to Washington, and to take me on a little tour of the Capitol, something I never

heard of him doing for any other freshman Congressman before or since. And it was an inspiring afternoon. He walked me around like a beneficent grandfather, through the galleries and the library and the chamber itself, the first time I had ever been on the floor, walking within these venerable and historic walls. He showed me where he sat and where I would sit. He pointed out the seals of the states—Hawaii's wasn't yet hung—and the fact that there were *only two pictures on the walls:* Washington's and Lafayette's. And through it all I listened and saw and walked with a sense of awe, a deep feeling for the continuing story of a great nation. Here I was, very newest legislator in Congress, in the presence of the great Sam Rayburn who, after the Vice-President, was next in line for the presidency of the United States.

Nor did he ignore the small but very practical aspects of life in Congress. Traditionally, he told me, shoeshine boys are not required by the rules to be paid by Congressmen, but, he harrumphed, a 25-cent tip would not be inappropriate. Here was the restaurant table where the Texas delegation usually sat, there was where the liberals gathered, and there the freshmen. "You are free to sit anywhere, of course," he said, "but I know I speak for all hands when I say the Texas delegation would be glad to have *you.*"

We went back to sit in the cool calm of his office and he said, "How does it feel to be a U.S. Congressman?"

I looked around the room, searching for the right words. "I'm very proud and very happy and a little scared, Mr. Speaker."

He nodded. "That's the way I felt. That's the way we all feel the first time, I guess. But there's no reason to be scared. If you're the right man you'll do well, and if you're the wrong man . . . well, being scared won't keep you from being found out."

He leaned back in that big chair and said, "I'll tell you a few things. The unwritten rules here are more important than the written ones. We don't sign contracts because a man's word is his bond. We are all different, representing a whole nation full of different people with different problems. In the beginning you'll find yourself hating some man for his position, cussing him out in your mind. But we get along here by respecting the needs and integrity of every man in the place—*each one, remember,* is an elected representative of the people—and we ask the same of you.

And if you're convinced in your heart that something is right, do it, go after it, fight for it, even if you find yourself a minority of one."

He paused again, looked out the window on the summer streets of America's capital. "I'm going to start right out calling you Dan, all right? Because I'm damned if I can pronounce that last name of yours. Now, Dan, I'm sure you know that I am the best-known member of the House of Representatives."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, after me, do you know who the best-known member is?"

"No."

"You."

"Me?" I looked at him with astonishment. Was he pulling my leg?

"Of course, you," he said in that flat, no-nonsense way he had. "Oh, maybe not this very minute, not today. But very damned soon."

"But—why?"

"Why? Well, just think about it, son. How many one-arm Japanese do you think we have in the Congress of the United States?"

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CHAPTER VIII

FOR THE U.S. SENATE: BENJAMIN F. DILLINGHAM III *vs.* DAN INOUYE

EARLY in the morning of the first Tuesday in November 1962, Maggie and I walked hand-in-hand to our precinct polling place in Honolulu. Somebody put leis on us and the photographers took our picture and the reporters yelled, "How does it look, Dan?"

I smiled at them. "I don't know. I'm not finished campaigning yet."

But I did know. I whispered to Maggie as we moved toward the voting booth: "How do you think you'll like being a Senator's lady?"

She looked up at me: "Being Dan Inouye's lady is what's important. The rest is just extra."

I squeezed her hand hard. After we'd voted, we drove around the precinct, stopping to talk to people, shake some hands, maybe even pick up a stray vote. I like to do that on election day, to be among the people. It strengthens me, somehow. We were back home by 5 P.M., cleaned up and had a simple dinner. Then Maggie said, "Well, shall we?" And I said yes and we drove down to campaign headquarters to listen to the first returns in the contest between Dan Inouye and Benjamin F. Dillingham III for the Senate of the United States.

It had been a long step, perhaps the longest, in this uniquely American journey. I had studied hard and worked hard during my three and a half years in the House. There was the strictly procedural but nonetheless urgent business of learning how to get things done. What department handles this problem? Which secretary has that information? Experience gradually taught me the answers, and persistence helped me to answer the average of 120 letters that flooded my office each day. I worked until midnight three or four days each week, driving slowly across from the House office building to our apartment still mulling over questions, problems, lines of action. I had never been so happy in my life.

I lived through a spate of publicity that seemed to lend truth to Rayburn's astonishing prediction. *Life* and *Look* had articles

about me. The Junior Chamber of Commerce named me one of the ten outstanding young men of the year. In every case I tried to convey my feelings—that I was happy to accept these honors, but that I did so on behalf of the people of Hawaii. In 1960, I won re-election with the greatest number of votes ever polled by any candidate in the Islands.

I made steady progress through those very intricate legislative chains of command. In 1960, the Speaker had offered me a seat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, an assignment with considerable prestige and the opportunity to attract national attention. I thanked him for his confidence but requested instead a seat on the House Agriculture Committee. I was letting myself in for constant controversy and an unending political headache, but the simple fact is that Hawaii is basically an agricultural state, heavily dependent on its sugar and pineapple and cattle industries, and from a vantage point on the Agriculture Committee I could contribute the most to my state

During the 1960 presidential campaign, I made no secret of my support for Lyndon B. Johnson. This was not the most popular position for me to uphold back home, for many of Hawaii's Democrats were strong backers of Adlai Stevenson or John F. Kennedy. The fact is that I had a soft spot in my heart for Stevenson myself and had been proud to cast my vote for him in the 1956 convention at Chicago. Certainly no one spoke more eloquently of the aspirations of men.

And so the Hawaiian delegation to the Democratic convention came to Los Angeles that summer of 1960 divided in their loyalties. A majority of my fellow delegates were prepared to cast their votes for Johnson, but the others held fast to their commitments to Stevenson and Kennedy. I might say that this was not an easy time to be a Johnson man; it seemed overwhelmingly likely that Kennedy was going to be nominated on the first or second ballot, which greatly intensified the feeling against those of us who persisted in holding out for "that Texan."

I had a key assignment in furtherance of the Johnson candidacy. I was to make one of the seconding speeches to his nomination. Not long before, Speaker Rayburn had called me in and said that LBJ himself had suggested I do this. In his uncompromisingly honest way, Mr. Sam then told me that he had been against the

idea because I was a newcomer to the political scene and Hawaii, after all, had only four electoral votes. But Johnson had insisted, and now Rayburn waited for my answer. I told him—in the understatement of the century—that I was surprised that Mr. Johnson had thought of me, but that I would be very proud to do it.

Early in 1962, Senator Long told me that he was going to retire from active politics and that he wanted me to succeed him in the U.S. Senate. In April, he publicly announced that he would not seek re-election and further said that he hoped I would become a candidate for his seat. The following week I announced my candidacy.

It was a difficult campaign in many ways. Congress was in session and I couldn't get home except for short visits of a week or so, sometimes for only two days. My opponent was to be Ben Dillingham, son of the wealthiest man in Hawaii, a onetime territorial senator and member of the board of supervisors, articulate, friendly, and so well known in the Islands that he invariably led his ticket. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* listed my chances as doubtful.

But Ben Dillingham had a couple of handicaps to go with his attributes. He was an arch-conservative who had gone down the line opposing statehood for Hawaii. Tabbed by one of the magazines as "a fat old young man" because of his enormous bulk—he stood 6′ 5″ and weighed nearly 250 pounds—and his turn-of-the-century view of politics, Ben worked tirelessly to live down the popular image of the rich *haole* who had exploited the people.

We made quite a contrast, the five-foot-six son of an immigrant, and the huge, rich, patrician Dillingham, and we got plenty of coverage. For a long time, with me stuck in Washington, Maggie carried the ball. She returned to Hawaii in June and spent seven days a week visiting every island and making hundreds of speeches in my behalf. When I finally did get back in October, my campaign manager met me at the airport and said, "We're glad to have you, but Maggie's been doing great."

As soon as I returned, Dillingham challenged me to a television debate. I promptly accepted. The arrangements proved difficult and time and time my people returned to say that the other side was making impossible demands about timing, subject matter and so on. Finally I instructed them to go back one last time and

agree to any format and detail the Dillingham people wanted. All I asked was to get in front of a TV camera with him.

The subject he chose, foreign affairs, seemed appropriate enough on the night we met. President Kennedy had just confronted Chairman Khrushchev with the evidence of Russian missiles in Cuba and we were in that tense and touchy period when for all anyone—including the White House—knew, nuclear devices might be flying between the continents at any moment. Dillingham, who had elected to speak first, chose this occasion to denounce Kennedy for this "political gimmick," to accuse the President of using Cuba and a manufactured crisis as a trick to get more Democrats elected to Congress.

The truth is that I could hardly believe my ears. Every politician makes mistakes, but this was a catastrophe. When it was my turn to speak, I began by saying, "Mr. Dillingham, I am astounded by what you have just said," and I went on from there. And that was the beginning of the end for Ben Dillingham's hopes of winning.

So it was that on election night, Maggie and I went to campaign headquarters feeling reasonably optimistic. Although the earliest returns seemed close, they came from areas where voting was by machine, almost all Republican-dominated. By 8 P.M., I had gotten out to a two-to-one lead, and thereafter it just kept getting bigger. There was, as you can imagine, intense excitement, which reached a fever peak shortly after ten when Ben Dillingham, his wife and children all came to my headquarters to offer their congratulations. I thanked him sincerely—his coming was a mark of the inherently decent and courageous man that he was—and then sought a moment's peace to contemplate what had happened.

I was going to the Senate, to the very highest reaches of my government, I, Dan Inouye, who had been raised in respectable poverty and whose father had been born in a tiny Japanese village. My face and eyes and shape would be different from those of my colleagues. I was not of the Western world. But the fact is that there was really not so great a difference between my story and the stories of millions of other Americans who had come to this land from Ireland and Italy and Poland and Greece. They had come because America would permit any man to aspire to the topmost limits of his own talent and energy. I am proud to be

one with these people.

Maggie and I spent New Year's Eve in Hawaii, then returned to Washington. The weather was unusually cold but we brought our own warmth with us: I was about to take my seat as a United States Senator and my father and two brothers had come along to see me take the oath of office. This was a special gladness because my father had suffered a heart attack some years before and had been unable to be in Washington when I was sworn in as a member of the House of Representatives. I know he always felt that to be a great loss. In a certain sense, January 9, 1963, belonged to him.

Because of my very junior status, there was no seat for him in the crowded family gallery to the left of the presiding officer. Instead, he sat at the other end of the chamber and, waiting my turn to take the oath, I kept searching the galleries for him. Then my name was called and I was escorted forward to where Vice-President Lyndon Johnson waited to administer the oath of office, a warm smile on his face. And as I raised my arm and swore to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States, I suddenly saw beyond the Vice-President's shoulder and directly in front of me the spellbound face of my father. Our eyes met and held fast. I tried to imagine what he was thinking. I felt an everlasting gratefulness to be alive, to be part of the turn of events that had brought Hyotaro Inouye to this time and this place.

In the hubbub following the conclusion of the ceremonies, I suddenly realized that Democratic Majority Leader Mike Mansfield was at my side. "Do you have any plans for lunch, Dan?" he was saying. "You and your family?"

"Well, I thought I'd take them down to the Senate restaurant."

"I imagine it'll be pretty jammed today," he said. "Why don't you all be my guests for lunch?"

The majority leader has a private dining room and I was greatly flattered that he would think to invite a most junior Senator and his family to join him there. After I got to know Mike Mansfield better, I realized that this was typical of this wise and gentle Montanan.

But the great glow of these days was not yet ended. As Maggie and my father and brothers and I were enjoying a sumptuous luncheon with Senator Mansfield, the telephone rang and I was

informed that the White House wanted to talk with me. If I swallowed hard and tensed up, I hope no one noticed. In a moment, that unmistakably crisp voice came crackling over the line:

"I called to offer my congratulations, Senator," said President John F. Kennedy.

"Thank you very much, sir."

"I understand your father is in town. I'd like to meet him."

"He'd be delighted, Mr. President, and honored. When would it be convenient?"

"Any time."

"How about tomorrow morning?" I asked.

"Fine. I'll see you here at 9."

Their eyes widened when I repeated the conversation. Mike Mansfield smiled, but no one spoke for a long time.

Promptly at 9 o'clock next morning, Maggie, my father and brothers and I were escorted into the Oval Room of the White House. President Kennedy rose from his desk to greet us warmly. We made polite conversation for a moment or two—although my father, usually quite open and talkative, could hardly find words—then the President took us on a tour of the White House, from his office to the Rose Garden, commenting in that incisive way of his on the rich history all around us, graciously answering our questions, chatting about Caroline and John and his daily routine. Officially, we had been allotted five minutes for the appointment, but it was a solid half-hour before he let us say our goodbyes and leave.

Outside the Oval Room, a crowd of reporters and cameramen surged around us.

"Did the President give you any advice, Senator?"

"Senator, Senator! Did you discuss any legislation with the President?"

"Did you talk about a civil rights bill?"

I raised my hand but it was a long time before they simmered down. When they finally did, I said, "Gentlemen, this is not my day. The President invited my father to the White House and I just happened to tag along. This is my father's day."

So they promptly besieged him:

"What did the President say, Mr. Inouye?"

"How did it feel to be in the White House?"

My father just kept shaking his head, a small smile on his lips, until at last they must have realized that he was totally unused to this rapid-fire press quiz and would not speak unless they were quite. When they were, my father spoke quietly but with enormous dignity. "I want to thank the people of Hawaii for their goodness to my son," he said, "for sending him to the Senate. For me, for *myself*, I have seen my son become a Senator, I have been invited to eat with the Majority Leader of the Senate, and now I have met the President of the United States. Nothing that happens to me now can be greater. I will die a happy man."

I walked close to him out to the car. If he was proud of me, I was no less proud of him, this man whose American odyssey had begun in a little Japanese village and come to a supremely fulfilling culmination in the Oval Room of the White House. I know that his prized possession is a photograph taken that day, now framed and hung in the house on Coyne Street, a picture of Hyotaro Inouye and John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

On July 14, 1964, Maggie and I were blessed with our first child, a son. He is six times the eldest son of an eldest son, and Maggie named him Daniel Ken, Jr. And now no man can be more gratified than I, happier with his family and his work.

THE AMAZING MISSISSIPPI

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THE AMAZING MISSISSIPPI

by

WILLARD PRICE

A CONDENSATION

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THE AMAZING MISSISSIPPI

Of all rivers, the Mississippi is surely one of the most interesting and varied. Willard Price follows it from its source in Minnesota over 2,500 miles to its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico. Little of significance escapes his eye as he travels its length by canoe, steamboat and launch, as well as by car, aeroplane and hydroplane.

He recognizes with delight the haunts of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. He recalls the New Orleans of bygone days, first as a Spanish, then a French, and finally an American city where the jazz era was born. He recounts exciting stories of steamboat races a century ago, describes some of the fearsome fish and reptiles to be found in the lower Mississippi, as well as the origins of some of the exotic vegetation along its banks—Spanish moss and the pestilential water hyacinth. The history of the Mississippi, from the legends in Minnesota to the superstitions of Louisiana, great floods of the past and the gigantic engineering feats built to stem the destructive power of a mighty river, are all recorded in this immensely stimulating book.

* * * *

Willard Price, author and explorer, has had a distinguished career in journalism, foreign affairs, and ethnographic exploration. After receiving his B.A. from Western Reserve University, and his M.A. from Columbia University, he engaged in editorial work in the field of foreign affairs. He has travelled to many parts of the world as a foreign correspondent and as an ethnographic researcher. He participated in expeditions for the American Museum of Natural History and the National Geographic Society to China, Micronesia, the Philippines, Sumatra, India, the Nile basin, the Sahara Desert, and the Amazon jungle.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

BACKBONE OF AMERICA

THIS is the story of America's greatest river as my wife, my sons and I encountered it. We saw it by canoe, houseboat, towboat, aircraft—even from dry land. We tried to begin at the beginning.

Forest-girdled Lake Itasca lies in northern Minnesota not very far from the Canadian border. Its discoverer, Henry Schoolcraft, fixed upon it as the true source of the Mississippi. Searching for some name that would suggest True Head, he came upon the Latin words *veritas caput*. He chopped off the first and last syllables and came out with Itasca.

Is Itasca the true head of the Mississippi? Sceptically, we explored the lake shore in our canoe. At the far end we found the source of the source of the Mississippi—a small stream flowing into Lake Itasca. This, we found flowed out of a smaller lake fed by a stream from one still smaller.

A ranger we met in Itasca State Park had this to say:

"The truth is that all the lakes in the Itasca region are interrelated by underground seepages and springs so that it is impossible to specify any one as *the* source of the Mississippi. You can only say that the source is the Itasca basin." The length of the Mississippi is as hard to establish as its source. The river channel is constantly changing. It is the crookedest great waterway in the world and the most fickle. Even the Army Engineers whose business it is to control the river say "approximately" when they estimate its present length at 2,434 miles.

It is the greatest river in North America; the greatest in the world with the possible exception of the Amazon. It has more than 100,000 tributaries. It and its affluents provide 15,700 miles of inland navigation. It drains forty per cent of the United States, not to mention 13,000 square miles of Canada.

Its drainage area stretches to a maximum of 1,900 miles in longitude and 1,400 miles in latitude and covers 1,243,700 square miles.

It pours into the Gulf of Mexico at the rate of 785,000 million cubic yards a year. It delivers three times as much water as the mighty St. Lawrence, twenty-five times as much as the majestic Rhine, 338 times as much as the Thames.

The Mississippi also carries mud at the rate of five hundred million tons a year. Enough mud has been thrown out to make a country the size of Portugal.

The Mississippi once poured into the sea at Cairo, Illinois. Deposits of sediment pushed the Gulf of Mexico farther and farther south, laid down a mud plain twenty to eighty miles wide and lengthened the river by some thousand miles.

Captain Marryat called the Mississippi "the Great Sewer." The Indians honoured the stream by describing it as half god, half devil. The Ojibways called it Misisipi, from *misi*, big, and sipi, river.

Imaginative French explorers translated the name as Father of Waters—incorrect perhaps but a name that does suggest the supremacy of the Mississippi among rivers. So does the Indians' nickname, "Old Big Strong," and the negroes' "Old Man River," and "Ole Miss."

The Mississippi links the agricultural mid-West and the industrial East with New Orleans and, through that second greatest of all America's export outlets, with all the world.

The greatest such port, New York, is also a part of the system. From the Mississippi by way of the Great Lakes and canals, cargo may be waterborne all the way to New York or Montreal, there to be transhipped across the Atlantic or around the globe.

During the steamboat era Mississippi tonnage was greater than the entire tonnage transported by all the ships of the British Empire. In 1849 there were a thousand big packets plying the river. But after the Civil War the steamboats were eclipsed by the railroads.

No one dreamed the Mississippi would ever come to life again. But during the two world wars the government, as an emergency measure to relieve transportation congestion, revived river traffic.

Mississippi traffic did not stop when the war stopped. Ever since the war tonnage has increased year by year. And yet the possible use of the river has only begun. With better control, better boats, perhaps atomic power, the Mississippi, already the most heavily loaded river on this planet, may be only in the early stages of its useful career.

INFANT MISSISSIPPI

MY two sons and I went by canoe down the first reach of the Mississippi River. Fortunately the Grumman Aircraft aluminum canoe drew only three inches. It was thirteen feet long and weighed but forty-five pounds, therefore was light to carry around obstructions. But when you have almost nothing but obstructions for eighteen miles and repeatedly find yourself with a three-inch-draught boat in two inches of water, you are inclined to give this part of the river back to the mosquitoes.

We estimated that the trip would take an hour. It took five. Even when the canoe was in the water we were seldom in the canoe. We were wading alongside, hauling or lifting the boat over pebbly shoals or rocky ledges.

The sinking sun found us still staggering about in the bewildering swamp.

The swamp had its own peculiar beauty. Brown cat-tails, blue iris, tawny reeds, yellow waterlilies were reflected in the sleeping water. Below us, what looked like pine forests in miniature rose almost to the surface.

The solitude was a lively solitude, alive with birds. The redwinged blackbird, grackles, veeries, wood thrushes, cedar waxwings, swallows, now and then a great blue heron ... We also saw muskrats, beavers, and deer, and could well believe what we had heard about how animal life here is increasing.

The river finally left the swamp, became straight and swift, and plunged down a chute several miles long between high banks supporting tall trees that met above to form a near-tunnel.

Though the river was now fast, we could not be, because the rapids were too shallow for navigation. And all this time we were going in the wrong direction. Wrong if we wished to reach New Orleans.

It was not our fault; for sixty miles the Mississippi flows north. The Missouri also flowed to Hudson Bay before the last Ice A[illegible]

[illegible]

it turns east. For some 120 miles the river flows towards Lake Superior. Again it has good precedent, for other rivers flow in the same direction and their waters reach the Great Lakes and ultimately the Atlantic Ocean. But when the young Mississippi is only about sixty miles from its goal it wanders south. The reason is that northern Minnesota is a three-way watershed, spilling off to the north, east and south.

North we went through the darkening tunnel. When we had begun to think of spending the night on a bed of leaves under a blanket of mosquitoes, the trees suddenly parted and there was the yellow car and Mary. We flung the canoe on top of the car and drove to Bemidji State Park where our 21-foot travel trailer stood within a few yards of the north shore of Lake Bemidji.

CHAPTER III

LAKES, NUDES, AND LOGS

THE next day we made the same trip by air, and saw Minnesota's celebrated Ten Thousand lakes (actually 11,007) at their best.

How were these lakes formed? Actually by receding glaciers during the Ice Age. But a Minnesotan prefers to tell you that they were stamped out by the hooves of Paul Bunyan's giant Blue Ox.

And who was Paul Bunyan? The legend of this Hercules of the northwoods is said to have begun in a rebellion in Canada a century ago. Later, Scandinavian lumbermen in Minnesota, who love to talk about feats of strength, adopted him. And so, not only in these woods but in the timber country from Maine to Oregon, big and humor-loving men took delight in spinning yarns about the biggest of them all, Paul Bunyan.

On the Bemidji lakefront a log-building houses an amusing collection of articles supposed once to have belonged to the redoubtable Paul—a gigantic axe, a pair of gloves five feet long, dice a foot high, a watch with a chain strong enough to moor an ocean liner. Outside on the shore stand two sky-reaching statues of Paul and his ox.

The town of Bemidji once had fourteen sawmills and cut a million feet of lumber a day. The stories have it that it was here that Paul Bunyan first saw the light. It took five storks to deliver him to his parents.

It is not stated whether the same storks brought Babe, the Blue Ox, who grew to be so big that the camp laundryman hung out the wash on his horns.

One day the camp tankwagon which Babe hauled sprang a leak. This created Lake Itasca and the overflow made the Mississippi River.

Babe had to have a watering trough and that was why Paul, in an odd moment, dug out Lake Superior.

Paul was a typical lumberjack, but on a large scale. He towered above the tallest trees and his stride covered twenty-four townships. His slightest whisper would make a cyclone in the Caribbean and he could let out a bellow that would cause a landslide on Pike's Peak.

All lumberjacks were great men in those days. Paul's cook,

Sourdough Sam, used a griddle covering about an acre, and his hundred helpers greased it by skating over it with slabs of bacon strapped to their feet.

* * *

Where the Mississippi flows out of Lake Bemidji it is two hundred feet wide and navigable for small craft. No longer need we carry the canoe—it will carry us. So begins a 400-mile canoe trip down one of the most delightful of rivers. Unlike the early voyageurs, however, we spend our nights in a trailer.

The day's routine is simple, at least in theory. Our helper, sometimes a friend, sometimes a garage man, arranges to meet us twenty-five miles downstream. That is an easy day's paddle. Our driver is to have the car at the meeting point at 5 P.M. Mary and I embark after breakfast. At 4:30 our driver picks us up and we return to our trailer. Every few days the trailer is moved another hundred miles downstream.

On the whole, it works well. But there are a few things that can happen, and do.

The driver forgets, or happens to be busy at 4:30. Or the point of meeting has been misunderstood. He concludes that we have been picked up by someone else and goes home. We spend the night on pine needles under the canoe.

But, barring accidents, the plan provides one great luxury that the explorers never knew: home at the end of the day.

* * *

For the most part, the highway does not attempt to stay close to the river, and its beauties are hidden. It is easy to imagine oneself a Joliet or Marquette while paddling down this undiscovered river. It flows today as it flowed then between unbroken walls of dark green conifers and snow-white birch, clear and pure until it joins the Missouri. You may paddle for half a day without sight of a bridge or a house or a human. It is your river, for your boat alone.

Minnesota has more than its share of the Mississippi. The river runs a third of its total course before it leaves the state. This is the most beautiful third of the river.

The young Mississippi frequently broadens into a lake. After Lake Bemidji come Wolf and Andrusia, then unique Cass Lake with its island enclosing another lake.

Much larger is Winnebigoshish. The name means "Miserable, wretched, dirty water." Most such Indian names were too hard for Europeans to pronounce and were lost. Some settlers, naming the Minnesota lakes, chose names like Sylvan, Alpine, and Elysian. But the average was not poetic. He was content with such names as Kettle, Spider, Spoon, Pickle, Plum, Duck, Turtle, Rum, and Whisky.

King of all swimming things in this fish paradise is the mighty muskellunge. Muskies measure up to eight feet and may weigh more than one hundred pounds. They lurk in the shallows behind a rock and dart out with incredible speed to catch a fish, a frog or a muskrat or leap from the water to snap up a low-flying bird. If there is nothing else to eat they do not hesitate to devour each other.

Trolling for muskies is exciting. The fish leaps from the water and attacks the lure so savagely that he sometimes breaks off a few teeth. Once hooked, he shoots up from the water and tosses his head back and forth like a dog, trying to shake himself free. When at last hauled in he is still full of fury and it takes a blow that would stun an ox to put him out of business. Many an apparently dead muskie has revived long enough to smash a boat's fittings and break a fisherman's arm or leg.

* * *

In the quieter stretches of the river the canoe slid through reedy shallows filled with wild rice—a commodity in which Minnesota does a million dollars worth of business a year.

It grows in shallow lakes and in the quiet backwaters of the Mississippi. It has always been one of the staple foods of the Indians. They still rely upon it, therefore the government protects it and places restrictions upon harvesting.

Non-Indians must have a licence—one dollar for the season. Game wardens are constantly on the prowl during the harvesting month, September, and strictly enforce these regulations.

Wild rice is parched like coffee, threshed to remove the husks, air cleaned and polished. Then it is packaged and put on the market.

The price is fairly high but justified by the expense of harvesting and processing.

* * *

A pow-wow sounds like fun. Yet there was something infinitely melancholy about the Chippewa pow-wow we witnessed in the depths of the Minnesota forest. To the beat of drums sad-faced men, women and children circled about in what was supposed to be a dance but was little more than a walk.

As the beer intake increased, the clouds lifted sufficiently to allow for a few songs. The Chippewas find escape and relief in music.

There are dream songs, hunting songs, love-charm songs, healing songs, songs praying for a good supply of maple sugar, songs of battle and death. There are songs that recall the exile of the Chippewas from their homeland. The entire upper half of what is now the State of Minnesota was ceded away by the Chippewas and the breakdown of their way of life began. The white man's diseases contributed to the decimation of the tribes. In 1837 a steamboat of the American Fur Company came up into the Indian country with several cases of smallpox on board. At a river port the Indians, despite warnings, insisted upon going on board and one made off with a blanket infected with the smallpox virus. Very soon several Indians were down with the dread disease.

The commander of the fur company's fort decided to vaccinate all the Indians in the district. He drew the vaccine from the existing smallpox cases, not realizing it was much too powerful to be administered to Indians with no racial immunity to smallpox. Of thirty squaws he vaccinated, twenty-seven promptly came down with the disease in its most malignant form, many of them dying within twenty-four hours. The survivors fled spreading the disease far and wide. Before the epidemic ran its course it killed seventeen thousand of the Blackfeet, Assiniboins, Mandans, Arikaras, Crows and Sioux. More effectively than many battles, the epidemic destroyed Indian resistance. Yet today American Indians steadily increase in number. They are, however, a disappearing race, becoming steadily less noticeable because of the rapid growth of the white population. They leave few enduring monuments.

It is a curious anomaly that the Indians are leaving less to

remember them by than has been left by their predecessors. Up and down the Mississippi Valley and elsewhere in the country stand some ten thousand earthen pyramids, believed to have been built by aborigines who antedated the Indian tribes. Why they were built is not clear, but they seem to have had religious significance and seem also to have been used as forts and tombs.

Their builders appear to have been more highly civilized than the Indians who came later. The hunting and household implements that have been dug up, the pottery vessels, the copper tools, the arrows, fishhooks, beads, pipes, are superior to most Indian artifacts.

At one of the rare waterside farms we saw on the beach a small square cabin belching both smoke and steam from its chimneys. *Could* this be a Finnish *sauna?* It was, and the farmer let us try it. As we approached, a girl, completely nude, was just coming out of the door. Her whole body radiated steam as if she were walking in a mist. She ran across the beach and plunged into the water.

We went inside. First there was a small dressing-room. Beyond it was the steam room fitted with a bench where the whole family and perhaps a few guests could sit, soap themselves and swelter in the steam. To increase the effect, they might beat each other with switches of prickly oak leaves, or birch twigs. When they could bear no more, they would run out and dive into the river.

Across from the bench was a wood stove. On top of it was a huge pan filled with rocks. The rocks gave off tremendous heat. But there was no sign of a boiler or other steam-producing equipment.

"How do you make the steam?"

"I'll show you." He took up a wooden bucket, filled it from a large tub, and threw the water over the stones. A dense cloud of hot steam immediately filled the little room.

With grave doubts, I disrobed in the dressing-room, went into the steam room and closed the door. Sitting on the bench, I found myself already dripping wet, thanks to the humidity.

After soaping myself, I flung a bucketful of water on the stones. The sudden steam made me gasp for breath.

Perspiration streamed out of me like juice from a squeezed orange. In ten minutes I felt as wrung out as a rag.

"Out already?" said my Finnish host as I [illegible] through the door and ran to plunge in the river. Later the [illegible] with a mug of mulled cider in the farmhouse. [illegible]

the afterglow. Every muscle, every nerve, was relaxed.

"It's good for neuralgia," said the farmer's wife. "And colds."

"You take these baths in winter too?"

"Certainly."

"But then you can't go in the river. It must be frozen over."

"Yes. We roll in the snow instead. A drift six feet deep forms against the north wall of the *sauna*. We have great fun in it." Yet the *sauna* is not just a bath. Traditionally it is a ceremony.

"The bathhouse is a kind of temple," writes Arthur Reade in *Finland and the Finns*, "and the bath has the nature of a ritual. The church and the bathhouse are holy places, says a Finnish proverb. The place has grave and lofty associations of another kind also. It is to the bathhouse that the mother retires when a child is about to be born and the temperature is made as high as possible in order to ease her delivery. To it also sick people are taken as to a hospital."

* * *

There's a long carry at Grand Rapids. A dam has taken the place of the rapids that gave the town its name, and above the dam the river is surfaced with several acres of logs waiting to be ground into pulp and turned into paper in the mill of the Blandin Paper Company.

This is one of the longest of the fourteen carries around dams on the way to Minneapolis. There navigation for large craft begins and every dam is supplemented by a lock. From Minneapolis to the Gulf, one need never take one's craft out of the water.

The logs remind us that lumbering is not yet dead on the Mississippi. To be sure, the logs are rarely floated down-river as they once were, but go by truck and train. Six million acres of commercial forest lie within easy reach of Grand Rapids.

The foresters develop new stands and protect old ones. The paper mills, when it buys logs from tree farms, gives the farmer seedlings to grow new trees. So the supply is maintained.

Not only is the Blandin mill dependent upon the Mississippi for power, but great quantities of water are required in paper making. And the water must be pure. Most important, it must be free of iron, which turns paper brown. The Mississippi meets these exacting requirements. (The same could not be said of it a thousand miles later.)

That the river should be untouched by iron is the more remarkable since it skirts one of the greatest iron reserves in the world, the famous Mesabi Range, which produced two-thirds of the nation's iron ore.

Brawny Norwegians, Swedes and Finns, wire Scots, Irishmen and French Canadians, staunch Germans, Poles and Lithuanians, made their own United Nations in the timber country of the upper Mississippi. A dozen languages were heard in the lumber towns *and the only common speech was the timber slang. Everybody knew* that a turkey was the lumberman's dufflebag, a nosebag carried his cold lunch, hay was his pay, a skypiece was a hat, a gazabo was any worker, and to get your stem cracked meant to break your leg.

An interesting survival or revival of lumbering days is to be found on Gull Lake near Brainerd. It is an authentic replica of a Minnesota lumber town of the 1870s.

You feel that you have stepped back a century as you stroll down the plank sidewalk past the old red schoolhouse, the log-built pioneer home, the ice cream parlour, the photographer's shop, the cobbler's bench, the fire barn and the blacksmith's shop to the Headquarters Hotel which, like its predecessor of the same name in Brainerd, serves family-style chicken and wall-eyed pike dinners with blueberry pie by the light of kerosene lamps.

The general store is stocked with the goods of the last century and the pioneer home not only has the old furnishings but the old lady who lived in this house as a girl. The lumberjacks and girls who stroll the streets in costumes made before the turn of the century make it easy to believe that they belong to a day gone by. Brainerd vies with Bemidji in claiming Paul Bunyan as a past resident.

CHAPTER IV

THE HEAVENLY TWINS

THE canoist paddles through much of Minneapolis scarcely aware that the city exists. In the heart of Minnesota's greatest metropolitan area the river passes through a sylvan canyon closed in on both sides by wooded banks some hundred feet high.

The gorge is a quiet bird sanctuary and probably about as it was when man first saw it, except that it is now crossed by bridges. These are so high above that they hardly disturb travellers on the river. For long stretches no houses are to be seen, yet we find later when we drive along the river roads that only a screen of trees shuts off beautiful residential districts from the solitude-loving river.

The Mississippi now flows through the busiest part of St. Paul fully exposed to view and affording docking facilities for large river craft. For commercial traffic the Mississippi begins at the Twin Cities. There the Falls of St. Anthony block off the upper reaches. This is most inconvenient for Minneapolis whose chief industrial district lies above the Falls.

To tap this industrial area, the Falls are now to be by-passed by two great locks. The lower lock, already built, has a lift of twenty-five feet. The upper lock, will hoist boats fifty feet, the highest lift on the entire Mississippi.

Above the locks an "Upper Harbor" 4.6 miles long will be constructed, comparable to the Port of New Orleans, and serving in this case a metropolitan area of one and a half million people.

We parked our trailer on the shore of pretty Tanner Lake on the eastern outskirts of St. Paul. From a small Cessna plane we got an overall view of the Twins with their lovely tree-sheltered streets, many parks, gleaming lakes, the Mississippi winding through in a great S.

St. Paul is known for its caves. For a mile or more beneath Cherokee Heights the cliff is pierced by caves. Many of them are protected by doors. Some are integrated with houses. Some are living-places themselves with a housefront built on. Some are used as stables or storage vaults, some as garages. One great cave dug five hundred feet back into the cliff is walled across the front to resemble a castle complete with turrets and battlements. This was

used as an underground night-club. Now, however, it is used as a vault for the storing and ageing of fine cheeses which are said to mature much better below than above ground. With the cheese caves of France in mind, the experiments were here begun by the division of dairy husbandry of the University of Minnesota. Now the business is on a commercial basis and care-ripened cheeses are shipped all over the United States.

Mushrooms also like the dark. Adjoining caves were used for growing mushrooms, but now they are produced in a nearby cement building, where each day the mature ones are picked by men and women who look like miners because of the electric torches fixed to their foreheads.

You may walk for hours underground; there are said to be twenty miles of tunnels under St. Paul.

"Research is the key to tomorrow" is the slogan of the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, more familiarly known as the 3M.

The research laboratories of the firm occupy large buildings, soon to be further expanded to spread over 150 acres. Twelve hundred scientists here labour to find better ways of doing things. The ideas they turn up take form in huge factories located some miles away in St. Paul and in 18 other cities.

Known as the inventors and makers of Scotch Tape, they make more than fifteen hundred different adhesives, and many other products.

CHAPTER V

STEAMBOAT MEMORIES

WE have now come to the river of big boats. The Mississippi from the Twins to the Gulf was once famous for its floating palaces, with great sidewheels or sternwheels, with tall chimneys crowned with iron plumes, with murals and chandeliers and sumptuous cabins and good food and a deep whistle and gay music on the calliope.

There are a few of the old steamboats left. We boarded one, the *Avalon*, at a St. Paul dock for an excursion downriver. Away aloft a steam calliope was playing *Cruising Down the River.*

The young first mate and musician told us about the calliope.

The calliope consisted of a row of steam whistles, each connected with a valve, every valve governed by a key on a keyboard like that of an organ. As each key was pressed the corresponding whistle let off a shrill note and a jet of steam.

It takes strong fingers and a strong back to play the calliope, and ears that will stand more violent sound waves than a hundred symphony orchestra instruments could produce.

The giant stern wheel began churning up the water like the wheel of an old-fashioned grist mill and in the spray that was tossed to the upper decks we could see a rainbow.

The *Avalon* is governed by an eight-foot steering wheel, the only wheel still in action on the Mississippi. Modern river-boats are steered by small levers.

The old-fashioned engine telegraph is still in use on the *Avalon.* On modern towboats the pilot does not signal orders to the engineer —he has all the engine controls under his own hands.

The pilot was particularly proud of the fine deep-throated whistle. He operated it by standing on a pedal—only his full weight would make it blow. On the new-fangled boats the pilot touches a button.

Early inhabitants of the Mississippi navigated the river in baskets, like the coracles still used on some rivers in Wales. The basket was round, some four or five feet in diameter, made of a wicker frame covered with a buffalo's hide. When white fur-traders invaded the valley they adopted the Indian craft but enlarged it. They called it a "bullboat" because of the use of skins of buffalo bulls.

The boats so built were commonly about 30 feet long. A cargo of

six thousand pounds could be carried.

Indians of Lake Superior used canoes of cedar wood and birch bark. The early white explorers and traders used them too, but again were not satisfied until they had increased their size and carrying capacity. At the height of the fur trade canoes were built to carry five tons or more. The pirogue was a canoe, but all in one piece, carved from a huge cypress log.

The timber age brought in the lumber raft. It was a way of getting the logs to market. Several thousand logs were bolted together to form a floating island some two or three acres in extent and shanties were thrown up on it to serve as bunkhouses and cookhouse for the crew who must row the raft to its destination.

Going down the Mississippi even with the help of the current is not easy, for the prevailing wind is dead against you. Weary oarsmen hailed with delight the invention in 1796 of a boat that replaced manpower with horsepower. It was a side-wheeler whose paddles were turned by eight horses on a treadmill below deck. But on the return journey against the current, and with the prevailing wind that did not always prevail, the horses broke down at Natchez. Both boat and horses were abandoned and the crew went home on foot.

The problem of how to get back upstream from New Orleans was presently solved, in a makeshift way at least, by the flatboat. The flatboat went down but didn't try to come back. It was a square-cornered, flat-bottomed craft, roofed over, about a hundred feet long, and looking remarkably like Noah's Ark, especially when it was used to transport cattle, hogs, horses, sheep and fowl as well as inanimate cargo. It was so cheaply put together that it was expendable and at New Orleans it was broken up and sold for lumber, the crew returning by land. During the first third of the nineteenth century as many as three thousand flatboats a year made the one-way trip to New Orleans.

Craft of the flatboat type were often used as shopboats. One was a floating drygoods store, one a complete blacksmith's shop, one a tinware factory, and one a floating foundry for the manufacture of axes, scythes and shovels. There were floating groceries, saloons, and barber shops. There was a circus boat large enough for horsemen, acrobats and trapeze artists. There were floating churches peddling bizarre doctrines and soliciting contributions from the faithful. There were floating theatres that not infrequently sold

tickets and then sailed away before show time. It was not too difficult to circumvent the law. Since the Mississippi itself was a boundary line between states, all that was necessary was to sail to the other bank to escape jurisdiction.

The flatboat's successor was the keelboat which had a keel to improve its navigability. It was long, slim and trim, and could make a two-way trip. After discharging its cargo at New Orleans it turned about and struggled back upstream. The oars were supplemented by sails which sometimes consisted only of blankets or a screen made of boards. Poles were used in shallow stretches. When the boat hugged the shore the crew laid hold of bushes and branches and pulled the boat along. This process was called "bushwhacking." If there was a path along the shore, the crew "cordelled" the boat by walking up the path pulling the boat after them at the end of a rope.

But something was happening that would soon make oars, poles, sails, bushwhacking and the cordelle unnecessary. Steam. After others had tried and failed, John Fitch, an American clock-mender, put together a steamboat and tried it out on the Delaware. It actually worked, but not very well.

He tried to get financial help, from Congress, from capitalists, from anybody, but failed. He scraped together enough money to pay his passage to France, got nothing but polite smiles when he talked about driving a boat by steam, and left his design with the United States Consul in France.

That gentleman was later visited by a young American artist, Robert Fulton. The conversation got around to fantastic inventions and the consul, to amuse his guest, brought out the steamboat drawings. Fulton got permission to keep them for several months.

Meanwhile John Fitch, penniless but persistent, kept experimenting and being laughed at until he killed himself.

But Fulton had been set to dreaming and the result was a successful demonstration of the *Clermont* on the Hudson River. Navigation of other eastern rivers soon followed. Fulton with two partners decided to try the Mississippi. In Pittsburgh they built and launched the *New Orleans*, a handsome blue sidewheeler. She sailed down to her namesake city without difficulty, but her engines were too feeble to bring her up against the current and her deep keel, patterned after the keel of ocean vessels, was not adapted to shallow water.

Her captain, Henry Shreve, saw what was the matter. A Missis-

sippi steamer must sail on the water, not in it. A few years later he built his own steamboat, flatbottomed, drawing so little water that amazed rivermen said it would "float on dew." His *Washington* had a high-pressure engine and was the first steam-driven vessel on the Mississippi to go upstream as well as down.

That did it. The keelboat followed the flatboat into oblivion. From 1816, to the end of the century, the steamboat was queen of the Mississippi.

"The steamboats were finer than anything on shore," wrote Mark Twain in *Life on the Mississippi.* "When a citizen stepped on board a big fine steamboat he entered a new and marvelous world."

There was always a well-stocked bar, and not only gambling tables but professional gamblers who could be trusted to make one's trip memorable.

The boat was as handsome without as within. Her twin smoke-stacks towered high and their tops were scalloped to look like feathers or ferns. On her sides appeared her name in gold leaf and sometimes above the name a landscape or mythical figure. She was decked with colorful flags. She never made port without music produced by calliope or orchestra and most of the town was at the dock to meet her.

Travel on a Mississippi steamboat was not only sumptuous, it could be highly exciting. One never knew when the boiler would blow up. Between 1810 and 1850 there were four thousand steam-boat casualties, most of them due to boiler explosions. The average life of a steamboat was reckoned at four to five years and it could be fairly sure of coming to a violent end.

The most serious single catastrophe in all the chequered history of the Mississippi was the explosion of the *Sultana* in April, 1885. In loss of life, this disaster ranked among the world's worst half-dozen of all time.

It was only eleven days after the end of the Civil War. Prisoners had been set free by both North and South and were returning to their homes.

The rickety old *Sultana,* once the pride of the river but sadly run down for lack of attention during the struggle, lay alongside the Vicksburg landing. One of her old boilers had a chronic leak.

But because she would carry them home she looked good to the 2,134 Union soldiers who climbed aboard her on that bright April

morning. Her captain knew he was taking aboard a thousand too many passengers, but he was under orders.

The *Sultana* moved sluggishly upriver. Badly overloaded, she had all she could do to get enough power from her weakened boilers. The leak grew steadily worse and at dusk the boat stopped at Memphis for repairs. A patch was applied and the boat went on, despite the engineer's comment:

"T'won't do any good. What you need is a new boiler."

Crewmen of the gunboat *Grosbeak*, moored in Memphis harbor exchanged shouts of greeting and farewell with the happy passengers of the *Sultana* as she resumed her journey north. They watched her lights dwindle to pinpoints in the darkness. Then they saw a sudden burst of flame and an instant later heard a deafening thunder. The explosion was followed by a steady glare, the brilliant holocaust of the burning steamboat.

The death toll was 1,550. It would be 47 years before this death record of Americans by shipwreck would be equalled, or nearly equalled, by the *Titanic* with the loss of 1,513. Yet, in spite of disasters, public demand for river travel kept growing and steamboats became fancier and faster. A speed mania took possession of the river. It was the ambition of every boat to "take the horns." Who originated the cutom is not known, but a pair of gilded deer antlers was awarded by a committee of judges to the fastest boat on the Mississippi. The antlers were proudly mounted on the front of the pilot-house. No boat owned these horns and they could be worn only during the period of her championship. Any boat making a faster trip took the horns. The transfer was made at a grand banquet and ball of river society.

The risks were many in every race to capture the antlers. Boilers became red-hot and the paint blistered on the chimneys. Firemen were plied with whisky to make them indifferent to danger. Safety valves were tied down, choking off the escaping steam, and increasing the pressure in the boilers close to the bursting point. Too often that point was passed and an explosion ended the race.

The most famous of all the contests was the one between the *Natchez* and the *Robert E. Lee* in June of 1870.

It was a contest between two men as well as two boats. The captains were sworn enemies. Shrewd, unscrupulous John Cannon was the captain of the *Lee*, hot-tempered, honorable Tom Leathers of

the *Natchez*. Leathers had won the golden antlers with another boat, the *Princess*, and he claimed his new boat, the *Natchez*, was even faster.

The boats were scheduled to leave at 5 P.M. Four minutes before that time the *Lee* threw off her lines and started upriver. At five sharp the *Natchez* followed.

The telegraph took the news to towns upstream and for a thousand miles spectators lined the levees and waterfronts.

At first the *Natchez* steadily gained on the *Lee*. This was taken as impressive evidence that, given equal loading, the *Natchez* was the faster vessel.

Then there was an anxious report from the engine-room. Water was spilling from a broken valve and lowering the steam pressure. Captain Leathers took his boat to shore, tied up to a willow, and the engineers worked on the valve while the *Lee* disappeared around the bend.

It was half an hour before Old Tom was once more on his way, again he had bad luck when the *Natchez* struck a sandbar. He was also slowed because he refueled in the normal way, while the *Lee* managed to refuel without stopping. But the *Lee* had engine trouble too. An overstrained and overheated boiler promised to blow up. Cannon would not stop for repairs.

A night and a day and a night and no sleep for either master. Then a new anxiety—fog. The boats were entering the "Graveyard Stretch," infamous for its shallows, rocks and shoals. The *Lee* blindly ploughed on. The captain of the *Natchez*, conscious of his responsibility to his ninety passengers and crew, tied up to the bank.

The *Lee* poked on, slowing down, sending a small boat ahead to make soundings. Three days, eighteen hours and fourteen minutes after leaving New Orleans the *Lee* trumpeted her arrival to the crowds massed on the St. Louis waterfront and the steamboat's deep whistle was answered with shouts, cannon shots, and general uproar from every steamboat whistle and calliope in the harbor.

It was a record and is still a record, unbroken even by modern towboats. The *Lee* got the horns. The *Natchez* trailed in the next day.

• • •

Why did the exciting and luxurious floating palaces of the Mississippi disappear?

People were in a hurry and roads and railroads offered faster transportation.

In spite of a hailstorm of protests, the Rock Island Railroad in 1855 spanned the river with a bridge between Rock Island and Davenport. The next year the *Effie Afton* struck a pier of the bridge, caught fire and sank, taking a part of the bridge down with it.

The owners of the sunken steamboat sued the Rock Island Railroad. The defence lawyer engaged by the railroad was a certain young Abraham Lincoln of Springfield.

This born and bred riverman prepared his case with skill. He admitted that the bridge was an obstruction to river boats, but argued that one man had as good a right to cross a river as another had to sail up or down it.

He painted in bright colors the future of the great West and urged that nothing should be allowed to stay the progress of development and civilization in that promised land.

The steamboat company lost its case against the railroad. Lincoln has been called the author of the American doctrine of bridges.

The golden age of the steamboat lasted only some eighty years. Even as early as 1874 a former pilot, who had known the river in its exciting heyday, noted its dreary return to primitive emptiness.

"We met two steamboats at New Madrid," wrote the author of *Life on the Mississippi*. "Two steamboats in sight at once! An infrequent spectacle now in the lonesome Mississippi."

CHAPTER VI

TOWBOAT, PLAYBOAT, SHOWBOAT

THE steamboat era is gone, but the Mississippi is more alive than at any time in its history. Thanks to the towboat, it now does in a day what it once did in a year. The towboat is one of the miracles of the transportation age. Instead of one deck it may have five or more. Instead of one engine it is likely to have four. Instead of one rudder it has ten. Instead of a few hundred horsepower it will deliver four to eight thousand. Instead of nudging an ocean liner it will push a fleet of barges carrying the load of two great ocean-going freighters. Instead of carrying a crew of two or three men it requires seventeen or twenty. Instead of costing a few thousand dollars, its owners consider it cheap if they can get it built for a million.

The towboat is not really a towboat. It is a pushboat. In the long-distant past it did haul its barges behind it but a string of barges trailing out behind could not be controlled. It shipped about like a crocodile's tail. Cross-currents or cross-winds threw it onto the rocks or into other boats or against bridge piers.

So the barges were put in front instead of behind. Barges perhaps three abreast and numbering a dozen or more were tied together so rigidly by steel cables that they became one unyielding raft and this tow (still called a tow although it was to be pushed) was locked in place before the towboat and so firmly integrated with it by steel cables that the entire fleet became a single unit subject to the slightest touch of the pilot upon the steering levers.

Push towing, thanks to the Mississippi example, is now being initiated in lands as far apart as Laos, Germany and Argentina. Mississippi captains have been called abroad to teach the new method on the Mekong, the Rhine and the Plata.

The Mississippi barge is a floating warehouse. One jumbo-size barge costs $90,000 to build. A standard barge weighs about three hundred tons and will carry a thousand in cargo.

A single barge will carry the load of three or four of the large packets of steamboat days. And one towboat may push twenty or more such barges!

An integrated tow, the entire unit lashed together to make one streamlined vessel, may stretch to twelve hundred feet—*longer than*

the largest ocean liner afloat.

This fabulous development in the history of transportation began during the first World War. Half a century before, the railroads had banished the steamboats. The river was rediscovered in 1917. The demands of war overwhelmed the railroads. The government commandeered the few barges and towboats that could be found on the Mississippi, hastily built a fleet of new boats, and formed what became known as the Federal Barge Lines.

Great stores of war materials began to move. Private investors saw the opportunity and formed barge lines of their own. The government, having demonstrated what could be done, sold the Federal Barge Lines to private investors in 1953.

Aboard the towboat *Huck Finn* of the Federal Barge Lines, we pass a city of dreams. With eyes open you see nothing but a house or two, but if you will close your eyes you can see many beautiful and busy streets, stores and warehouses, five church spires springing a hundred feet into the air, a magnificent courthouse and docks where huge piles of freight are being loaded on big steamboats.

That was the way the non-existent city of Nininger was pictured on the beautifully engraved maps circulated in New York and Boston early in the steamboat era. Copies of the Nininger *Daily Bugle* described the social events of Nininger, how Mrs. Newbody had entertained fifty guests at her new residence on Park Avenue—and the name of every guest was given—how the big drygoods merchant had gone east to buy his spring stock, how fast new buildings were going up and property values rising.

Among the advertisements for grocery stores, haberdasheries, hardware stores, millinery stores, shoe stores and blacksmith shops and the announcements of services in the churches and theatrical performances in the auditorium were notices of lots that might be had for a good price if the buyer was quick about it.

Every name, every business, the entire city was a product of pure imagination. The fraud was on so colossal a scale that it was perfectly convincing. Easterners bought up the whole prairie for two miles back from the river at ten thousand dollars an acre and more.

The land sharks then disappeared and the few buyers who managed to get through to the Mississippi searched in vain among the sloughs and marshes for the city of Nininger.

Rolling Stone was another such mythical metropolis and dozens

of promoters got out glowing prospectuses on imaginary town sites all along the river below St. Paul.

Between St. Paul and St. Louis there are more than five hundred islands and thousands of islets. The river broadens at times to three miles or more. It is always varied and beautiful.

Every form and color is provided by the intermingling of cottonwood, ash, poplar, elm, white birch, black walnut, red cedar, ironwood, juniper, wild apple, hazelnut, elderberry, dogwood and sumac.

The many locks and dams have converted the river into a staircase of placid lakes full of islands, and these lakes make pleasant cruising grounds for thousands of houseboats.

Through a paradise of islands in a valley six miles wide we proceed to a region where the Mississippi actually consists of more land than water, so many are its islands. The Dresbach Dam looms up like a Roman aqueduct.

The lock is not big enough to take our whole tow at one bite. Like most of the Mississippi locks, it is 600 feet long and 110 feet wide. We must resort to double locking—that is, tie off half of the barges to the shore, put the other half through the lock, then come back for the rest. This takes an hour or more, whereas single locking takes fifteen minutes.

"When the locks were built," says the lockmaster, "a *future* of 750,000 tons a year was anticipated. Now seven million tons a year go through, nearly ten times what was expected. Our locks should be at least twice as big as they are."

Night and day the towboat ploughs on, silent, except for the sound of its engines. We pass the Green Tree Hotel on the river front at Le Claire—the magnificent elm rhapsodized by Mark Twain and enshrined in the Hall of Fame for Trees in Washington.

Twice as broad as it is high, shading an area of a hundred feet in diameter and affording a fine view up and down the river, it became a rendezvous for penniless rivermen. It adjoined the steamboat landing and there was no better place to keep an eye out for a new riverboat job. Under its shade men spread their blankets and cooked their meals and made their home for weeks at a time. They dubbed this inexpensive open-air lodging-house the Green Tree Hotel and it became known by that name among rivermen from St. Paul to New Orleans

Among the boys who played beneath the Green Tree was one who grew up to be a legend for all boys everywhere. He was a

famous scout and guide, a rider for the Pony Express, and a buffalo hunter with a contract to provide meat for the labourers building the Kansas-Pacific Railroad. It was this latter occupation that earned him his nickname. Under the Green Tree stands a granite slab to his memory and it bears this inscription:

Dedicated to
Colonel William F. Cody
"Buffalo Bill"
By his friend and boyhood playmate
Joe Barnes
erected in 1924

The Green Tree Hotel has been open for business since long before the War Between the States, and as we passed we could see that it was still fully booked up, more than fifty men and boys cooking, eating, playing cards or playing pranks in its cool shade.

Large cities are becoming more numerous, Dubuque, Davenport, Moline, Rock Island, Burlington, Quincy.

Deep in its Mormon memories lies Nauvoo. Here the first members of a unique American religious group had come when they were expelled from Missouri because people feared they meant to take the state as their own.

Mormon missionaries sent converts from other states and even from England to Nauvoo which speedily became a city of twenty thousand people, a greater population than Chicago at that time. Because the Mormons voted in a bloc, the state of Illinois became nervous over its political potentialities, particularly when Joseph Smith announced himself a candidate for president of the United States.

Life was not easy in Nauvoo. The winters were rigorous and the summers malarial. The Mormons had no competent doctors, but their leader, Joseph Smith, practised faith-healing. Brigham Young later recalled the prophet's miracles, "Joseph commenced in his own house and dooryard, commanding the sick in the name of Jesus Christ to arise and be made whole, and they were healed according to his words. He then continued to travel from house to house, healing the sick as he went."

These wonders were proclaimed abroad and immigrants streamed in from Europe. They were advised by the missionaries that delay would be fatal since it was God's plan that the Atlantic would dry up and the journey to America would then be impossible.

Joseph Smith had numerous "revelations" in one of which he was commanded to build a temple which should be "the most magnificent religious edifice in the world." It was built of native white limestone at a cost of a million dollars and combined Romanesque, Greek and Egyptian architecture. Topping its spire was a golden figure of the angel Moroni, he who had revealed to Joseph Smith the golden plates which, translated, became the Book of Mormon.

In another revelation Joseph Smith was directed to establish the doctrine of "celestial marriage," an exalted term for polygamy. Plural marriage was to be not only permissible but desirable, it being Mormon doctrine that no woman could enter Heaven unless sealed "for time and eternity" to a member of the Mormon church.

Not all Mormons supported the new doctrine but dissenters were stripped of their property, and forced to flee for their lives. When they complained to state authorities, Joseph Smith gathered about him a military force called the Nauvoo Legion and declared martial law in Nauvoo.

For these acts, he was charged with treason and transferred to the county gaol in Carthage. Here lynchers broke in upon him. He made a dash for the window and leaped to his death on the stone flags of the gaol yard.

The trek led by Brigham Young from Nauvoo to Utah is history and the fine character of the Mormon community in that state is well known. Nauvoo is a modern river town now more Catholic than Mormon, but houses of the first settlers are still to be seen and two of them have been turned into museums. The proud temple was destroyed by fire and the stones were carted away to build houses and stables.

* * *

Now we come to the new Keokuk Lock, believed by the U.S. Engineers to be the world's largest in water volume. It is 1,200 feet long and 110 wide (Panama locks are 1,000 feet long and 110 wide). The normal full depth of the Keokuk Lock is 38.2 feet.

To get a true impression of its size it is necessary to enter it in a small canoe, as I did later, and look up at its towering walls. This immense concrete tank, with as much water capacity as a small lake, fills to the level of the upper pool in about ten minutes. The old lock was only 358 feet long. It was a bottleneck. A towboat with an

eleven-barge tow could not get through in less than seven hours. Today the same tow would go through in twenty minutes.

We come to storied Hannibal, scene of the exploits of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn and home of their creator, Mark Twain.

What was a small village in Twain's day is now a sprawling city. but it still has a sleepy, storybook air and is obviously proud of its Twain tradition. A museum contains many interesting objects associated with the author, and adjoining it is the Clemens home with small rooms, low ceilings, a ladderlike stairway.

A block away from a disreputable alley lived Tom Blankenship, bosom friend of young Sam Clemens. At night the boys would converse from one house to the other by means of a code of catcalls. Then Sam would step out the window, slide down the roof of the house and descend by an arbour to join his arch conspirator for a night of mischief. Of course Tom Blankenship was the ideal prototype for Huck Finn.

At the foot of Cardiff Hill we came upon Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn in person. The bronze figures are splendidly done to represent the carefree dress and adventurous spirit of two boys who somehow seem more real to young readers than many of their own living friends.

We poked our way into McDougal's Cave where Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher got lost, repeating more or less the actual experience of Sam Clemens and Laura Hawkins. It was and is a bewildering labyrinth of tunnels, some of the passageways believed to penetrate beneath the Mississippi itself. It was a hiding place for runaway slaves, and a refuge for criminals.

South of the town is Lover's Leap whose legend of Indian lovers going to their death is not as interesting as the actual record of what happened here in the 1840s, when a religious group selected this as a jumping-off place to Heaven.

Their leader, a New York deist, had warned them that the end of the world was at hand. Thousands were conv nced. They resigned their jobs, neglected their crops, closed their stores, dressed in long white robes and ascended to the pinnacle to await the final trump. It did not come.

The deist explained the reason—lack of faith. Some doubters had failed to surrender their earthly possessions. They would have one more chance. He himself would accept their earthly goods, thus freeing their souls for the great event which was now scheduled to

take place on 22 October of the following year.

The faithful divested themselves of all but their white robes, ascended once more to the crest above the winding Mississippi, and again Gabriel was silent. The dispossessed looked for the deist, but he was not to be found.

Sam Clemens became a printer's devil on a small Hannibal newspaper and later an assistant editor. The river was his joy and his love. He stowed away on a packet, was discovered, and thrown ashore nine miles downstream. He studied for a pilot's licence, got it, and came to know intimately every island and bend from St. Paul to New Orleans.

The self-importance of a Mississippi pilot is perhaps justified, for he has mastered a most difficult profession. He must not only know his craft—he must know his river. Before he can get his pilot's licence the novice must be able to draw any section of the river showing its exact width, position of the best channel, location of shoals, bends, points, day-boards, lights and landings.

He needs to be an interpreter of signs and portents. A floating log shows that the river is rising, a slanting line on the surface means a reef beneath, "boils" are a warning that a bar is dissolving and a new channel forming, a whirlpool may mean the deposit of a new shoal, an almost imperceptible V may be caused by a dangerous snag just below the surface.

He becomes a weather forecaster. A sticky pilotwheel in the evening means fog before morning. Three foggy mornings usually bring a rain. If the gulls are restless a storm is likely within twenty-four hours. Thick frost on the trees portends a thaw and a flood. An east wind brings rain and a west wind, clear weather.

No pilot can know it all, though some pretend that they do. Modest Abe Lincoln, applying for a pilot's job, was asked,

"Are you acquainted with the river, and do you know where the snags are?"

"Well," replied Abe hesitantly, "I'm pretty well acquainted, but the snags, I don't know exactly so much about them."

"Don't know about the snags?" exclaimed the captain, contemptuously. "You'd make a pretty pilot!"

"What for do I want to know where the snags are?" drawled Abe. "I know where they ain't, and that's where I do my sailing!"

He was hired and that captain later testified that Abe Lincoln was one of the best pilots on the river.

We disembark at St. Louis, which used to see a hundred steamboats lined up along her jetty at one time and which now knows an amount of river traffic never dreamed of in steamboat days.

But there is one remarkable and thriving survival of the old days —the steamboat, *Admiral*. We go aboard her for an afternoon excursion.

It is a truly fabulous boat, the biggest river excursion steamer in the world, 387 feet long, six decks high, 98 feet from the water to the top of the pilot-house.

It was built shortly after the turn of the century at Vicksburg as a railroad ferry. It was made over into an excursion boat in 1941.

One of its main features is an enormous ballroom accommodating two thousand dancers at one time. A twelve-piece orchestra provides the music.

The main deck is unbelievable. It is a floating carnival, with every sort of bright and gaudy machine to play games on, rifle ranges where grizzly bears taunt sharpshooters, fortune-tellers, ice cream, hot dogs. This amusement park afloat (where railroad trains used to be carried) is as long as a city clock and half as wide. The capacity of the boat is four thousand and on the day of our excursion it was completely sold out.

Moored to the St. Louis jetty near the *Admiral* is the *Goldenrod,* one of the last of the showboats. She still stages a melodrama every night at 8:30. The bill is changed once every two weeks. Captain J. W. Menke, has taken her up and down every navigable river of the West. The boat dates back half a century.

Already gone is the circusboat, gaily painted, carrying a menagerie of ponies, dogs, wildcats, monkeys, a few yards of sluggish serpent, some clowns and acrobats, and a brass band. The amphitheatre of the *Floating Palace* could seat a thousand persons to view bareback riding, trapeze acrobatics, and the growling performance of a mangy lion.

We rejoined the *Missouri*. And so on down the magnificent waterway past Cape Girardeau on the Trail of Tears, by which the Cherokees, after being evacuated from their land in Tennessee and Georgia, made their long journey to the unknown west.

We landed in Cairo. Flying back to St. Paul, we recovered our car and trailer and spent many days driving down slowly through river towns back to Cairo.

CHAPTER VII

THE MISSISSIPPI IN EGYPT

WHY should the southern end of Illinois be known as Egypt? It seems to have begun with the naming of Cairo, whose founders considered the location similar to that of the city on the Nile.

Cairo was a slum built in a swamp. Charles Dickens, suffering from indigestion, described it as "a breeding place of fever, ague and death, a dismal swamp on which the half-built houses rot away, the hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it and turning off upon its southern course, a slimy monster hideous to behold."

The visitor to Cairo today would not recognize it by this description. The water has been pumped out of it, most of the mosquitoes banished, and it is as prosperous a town as any other.

Cairo, like Manhattan, is long and narrow and wedged in between two rivers—far greater rivers than those that pass New York. High levees keep out the Mississippi on the one side and the Ohio on the other.

We drove down to the point where the two rivers meet. Walking out to the tip of the land, we had the dark translucent Ohio within ten feet of us on the left, the brown opaque Mississippi equally close on our right. Stretching out ahead of us was a smooth, ripple-free band caused by the boiling of the meeting currents.

In the middle is point zero. For here is where the Upper Mississippi ends and the lower Mississippi begins.

The Mississippi's delta, geologically speaking, begins at Cairo. Ages ago the Gulf of Mexico penetrated to this point. The mighty river gradually filled it with silt, and now winds nearly a thousand miles through land of its own making.

The Ohio, though shorter than the Missouri, contributes a far greater volume than either the Missouri or the Upper Mississippi itself.

The consequence is that from here on we have a quite different Mississippi. It is no longer a sweet river; it is grand. It is no longer *pretty; it is majestic. It is a half-tamed giant capable of carrying* enormous commerce to man's benefit, but guilty of devastating floods, savage eccentricities, sinkings and drownings without number.

It is no longer a small-boat river. Except for two or three hazard-

ous experiments, we leave our little aluminium egg-shell safely on top of the car until we reach the quiet bayous of the South.

The Mississippi changes its sex at Cairo. The charming upper river is unmistakably feminine. The big brute of a lower river is just as certainly masculine.

It was on these lower reaches that the Indian and Negro nicknames, Old Big Strong, Old Man River and Old Devil River were born. But the great mythical figure of the lower river is Old Al, the River King.

Old Al was created by the black roustabouts of the steamboat age, but even the modern deckhands of the towboats sometimes declare that they have seen him. As described by folklorist Ben Lucien Burman, Old Al is a male alligator bigger than a barge. He bears a gold crown on his head and holds a huge pipe of tobacco in one of his scaly paws. With his other paw he takes delight in scooping up a sandbar to block a passage or plucking men off barges for his dinner. With his tail he switches currents this way and that to throw a tow up against a bridge pier or smash a levee or toss floods over farms and villages.

The voodoo doctors of the deep South sell good luck charms guaranteed to keep Old Al in his place. The roustabouts used to find that a dog or pig dropped overboard would sometimes mollify the king.

The river behind us is a dug-out river. It has made a trench for itself and the rock walls of the trench rise sometimes three hundred feet high.

The river ahead of us has an entirely different idea. It rides on top of the land, somewhat like an aqueduct.

You look down upon the upper river from the precipices that contain it. You look up to the lower river from lands that have to be protected from it by levees.

Streams flow into the upper river. Streams flow out of the lower river. There are exceptions. One large river, the Arkansas, and a few smaller ones do manage to penetrate into the Lower Mississippi. But the mighty Red River, after coming within seven miles of the Mississippi, gives up the struggle and takes a short-cut to the Gulf.

The farmers of lands from Cairo to the sea are ever conscious of the river above their heads. They are protected by earthen levees thirty to fifty feet high extending for more than 3,500 miles along

the main stem and subordinate waterways. This quite eclipses the Great Wall of China, some 1,500 miles long and twenty-two feet high.

Cities are fewer than along the upper river and must choose their sites with care. Vicksburg and Natchez find refuge on hills. New Orleans is normally four to seven feet below river level, in flood time eighteen to twenty feet below. During high water residents may see boats float by above their heads. Rainfall in the city does not drain down and away. It must be pumped *up* into the river.

* * *

Sometimes by boat, sometimes by road, we worked our way south. We came to New Madrid, a town that has had to move four times to escape the caprices of Old Al, the god-alligator. It was intended that this should be the capital of a new Spanish empire. Hence the name, New Madrid. It was to be a utopia, the most beautiful city in America, with streets ninety feet wide, parks along the river front, churches of every creed, and no taxes!

In 1811 the river exploded into fountains and geysers thrown up by a violent earthquake. The quakes continued for two years. This was only the first of a number of river disasters. Four times in all, New Madrid moved back. The site of the original New Madrid is now under the Mississippi River near the Kentucky shore.

New Madrid no longer fears the river since the U.S. Engineers put in dykes upstream causing a bar to form, which diverts the main channel to the Kentucky side. But now that the town, like most others, wants to take advantage of the new traffic on the river and attract industrial plants to New Madrid, it has petitioned the Mississippi River Commission to take measures to change the direction of flow so that the bar will be washed out and New Madrid will have access to a deepwater port for her hoped-for industries.

* * *

With Tennessee on one side of us and Arkansas on the other, we feel we are getting into the real South.

But if the Northerner supposes his city to be more brisk and crisp than the towns of the Old South, he will be amazed by Mem-

phis. Here is a city as clean and new as a freshly-minted silver dollar. Few cities in the nation are growing more rapidly or more tastefully.

Memphis had a bad start. When a yellow-fever epidemic crept up the river from New Orleans in 1878 it took hold with special virulence in Memphis. All who could fled to the country. The rest stayed indoors. Trade and traffic stopped. The stillness was broken only by the cry, "Bring out your dead," as the hearses made their rounds. Pits were dug and filled with thousands of corpses. The epidemic ended with an October frost. Of the 45,000 Memphians, 25,000 had fled, 17,000 had been stricken and 3,000 had died.

It set Memphis back on its heels for half a century. Today there are no visible marks of the painful past.

Modern Memphis is the largest cotton market in the world. It is the world's largest hardwood lumber market. It is one of the finest of river ports.

CHAPTER VIII

OLD AL ABDICATES

THE most stirring story to come out of the Mississippi Valley is the story of the conquest of the Father of Waters by the U.S. Engineers.

Near Vicksburg, a gigantic model of the Mississippi System laid out on a site of eight-hundred acres, with real water running through its channels to simulate the rivers, enables the Engineers to determine just what should be done next and where.

In Vicksburg we met the monarch who had taken the place of Old Al as the River King. He was Major-General John R. Hardin, President of the Mississippi River Commission, about to retire with all the principal battles won; he believed the river was now under such control that not only a flood like that of 1927 could be disposed of, but a possible super-flood 20 per cent greater.

This does not mean that the Mississippi will give no more trouble. It does mean that the terrible disasters of the past are not likely to be repeated.

The flood of 1927 drove 800,000 people from their homes. Heavy rains pouring upon the Mississippi watershed which stretches to within 250 miles of the Atlantic and 500 of the Pacific, an area of about 1,224,000 square miles, drained into the central river. It was estimated that a fabulous 250 cubic miles of water fell in the Mississippi area. Much soaked in, much evaporated, but 60 cubic miles of it were left to swell the big river.

Terrific currents chewed holes in the levees and poured through to inundate towns, carry away houses, and bury farms in muddy water as much as 18 feet deep. The river broadened in some places to a width of 80 miles. Many people were trapped and drowned. Animals fled to the high places—mounds, trees, chimneys. They forgot their animosities. Old enemies huddled together in terror, rabbits, muskrats, herons, chickens, possums, snakes, foxes, raccoons and deer. Horses swam away until they were exhausted or found refuge, but the cattle stood impassive in the water until they drowned or starved to death.

New Orleans saw the river rolling above her, topping the levees. Thousands of sandbags increased the height of the levees, but still

the river rose. Was there no way to save the city with its half million population and its millions in wealth?

There was a way. Officials talked about it in whispers. But the word got out. The country-folk of the marshes and bayous below New Orleans were horrified. They were to be asked to accept ruin so that New Orleans might be saved. The idea was to make a deliberate break in the levee through which the river could pour out over the southern parishes and so relieve the threat to New Orleans.

The farmers, trappers, fishermen protested, but without success. Soldiers were sent to superintend the blasting of the levee at Caernarvon. Trucks came to haul away the household goods of the people who were about to lose their homes. Compensation would be paid to all evacuees. The wealthy merchants of New Orleans would take care of that. But what compensation could there be for such loss?

People and their possessions were loaded into trucks and carried off. Many refused to go. They had faith that prayers and charms would avert flood. Some of the aged, too frail to travel, preferred to drown. The levee was dynamited, the angry Mississippi poured through the breach, and New Orelans was saved.

The Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, have transformed the river. They had made many cutoffs even before 1874 when Mark Twain wrote *Life on the Mississippi*, in which the humorist calculated that if they kept on shortening the river at the same rate "any person can see that 742 years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three quarters long, and Cairo and New Orleans will have joined their streets together." Between 1929 and 1942 the Engineers made sixteen cutoffs, shortening the river 151.8 miles.

The cutoffs have several merits. Less mileage between St. Louis and New Orleans means quicker transport. The straightened river does not cut into its banks so severely as when it had to swing around curve after curve. Since the grade is steepened, the current is faster and stronger. In times of flood the swollen waters are not blocked and turned aside in loop after loop, and thereby compelled to spread out over the country, swamping towns and farms. The straightened channel carries them swiftly through to the Gulf. A given volume of water can get through in far less time. Thus the runoff may be able to keep up with the rainfall.

The building of the great wall, twice the length of China's, also

devolves upon the Engineers. The levees lining both sides of the river do not, as one might imagine, sit on the bank of the river. They may be back as far as five miles from the stream. This is to give the River King room to thrust out his elbows at floodtime. The water spreads gently over the lowlands and loses much of its force before it reaches the levees.

These great earthen battlements, a hundred feet thick at the base and three or four storeys high, look completely invulnerable. Yet so small a thing as a pocket gopher may destroy them. A gopher, rat or armadillo makes a small burrow, then perhaps an internal system of runways, side branches, chambers for storage and nests. Some day the water rises, enters the burrows, and gradually reduces the solid bank to a mound of mush. The slopes slough off and slide down. The seepage comes through to the inner side and becomes a continuous stream, the hole broadens with amazing speed and the stream is a torrent. The earth above the hole drops and is washed out, and the result is a crevasse through which a Niagara pours into the back country sending people upstairs or into boats or to seek precarious refuge on the crest of the remaining levee.

Only eternal vigilance can prevent such catastrophes. The levees are usually kept clear of vegetation so that fiddler crabs and other borers can be more easily seen and destroyed. Burrows must be filled. During high water guards must walk the levee and watch for "boils," small geysers marking the beginnings of breaks

One of the greatest achievements of the Engineers has been the construction of the Bonnet Carré Spillway which in case of need will carry almost two million gallons per second out of the river and through Lake Pontchartrain to the sea, side-stepping New Orleans; and the even more ambitious Morganza Floodway which will divert flood waters from the Mississippi down the basin of the Atchafalaya to the Gulf.

In 1937 the work of the Engineers was put to the acid test. The largest flood of historical times poured down the Mississippi. The army was ready to evacuate a million people *if* the levees broke. Cairo, trapped between the Ohio and the Mississippi, pumped water out of town as fast as it flowed in over or through the levees. The river was three miles wide at Memphis and climbing into the town. The Bonnet Carré Spillway, completed only two years before, was opened, a gate at a time.

It was a near thing. In many places the water was levee-high. Hodding Carter looked from his newspaper office window in Greenville to see Coast Guard cutters moored twenty feet above street level. But the levees held and through the Bonnet Carré enough water was drawn off to cover 1,250,000 acres ten feet deep. This lowered the river level for more than a hundred miles and New Orleans was safe.

The Engineers were not satisfied, even with controlling the biggest flood on record. The new spillways, the lakes of the Upper Mississippi converted into reservoirs, the dams and locks, the strengthened levees, are all insurance against a possible superflood.

CHAPTER IX

SNAGBOAT AND *DELTA QUEEN*

ANOTHER vessel unique to the Mississippi is the snagboat. Snags are among the chief perils of the big river. Undercut by the current, a bank will cave in, hurling big trees into the river. The roots of the tree will sink to the bottom because they are heavily embedded with dirt. The top of the tree, being lighter, will float on or near the surface and the current will point it downstream.

The snag that stays in a fixed position is called a "planter." One that keeps lowering and raising its head is a "sawyer." Either may stave in a boat coming upstream, but the sawyer is the more dangerous. Its rhythm may be very slow so that it is out of sight for many minutes at a time. The steersman looks out upon perfectly smooth water only to see a monster rear its head ten feet above the surface when it is too late to avoid it. "*Chicots*," the teeth of the river, the French used to call these snags, and they can bite a hole through the toughest hull. It is the business of the snagboats to pluck these obstructions out of the channel.

We rode the big sternwheeler snagboat *Charles H. West* from Vicksburg to Greenville. From a lofty A-frame on the bow of the vessel dangled a gigantic pair of tongs which could grip and haul out a log as easily as a dentist could pull a tooth.

We seemed to be making for a small stick projecting from the water. It was only as big as my arm and rose but a few feet above the surface.

The *West* slowed up to the stick and the tongs descended and bit in. Up came the stick, foot by foot. It grew thicker and heavier and still it came, ten feet, twenty, thirty and still more until the top of it rose above the lofty pilot-house and the roots rested on the deck. It was a cottonwood log no less than one hundred feet long. The men cut it into short lengths with power saws and dumped the pieces overboard to float harmlessly away.

Another task of the snagboat is the placing of buoys. Can buoys, shaped like a can, mark one side of the channel and nun buoys, topped with a hood like a nun's, mark the other. They must be moved frequently in accordance with changes in the channel. A master with his eye on the fathometer must determine the proper

location of every buoy.

One of the most extraordinary feats of the Engineers is the paving of the river-bed. The Lower Mississippi over much of its length is now a paved street. The paving usually does not floor the central channel but covers the bank where the current and wave action would otherwise wash it away. It may extend six hundred feet or more from each shore towards the middle of the stream.

This flooring used to consist of trees bound together with wire into mats sometimes a mile long. Today the mats consist of reticulated slabs of concrete. These blocks are linked together with stainless steel wire, the whole forming a flexible mattress. The alligator-god who rules the river will even chew up concrete in time, but such a mat will usually last twenty or thirty years.

* * *

The paved Mississippi is like a great avenue, the more so because it even has its street lights. Mark Twain's "two-thousand-mile torch-light procession" consists of a line of light standards on either side of the river, each one a tripod-post about twelve feet high painted white and furnished with a ladder by which one may reach the lamp. Batteries are now taking the place of kerosene to light the lamps.

* * *

Natchez is one of the "musts" of any Mississippi journey. In the era of the great cotton planters, this city claimed more millionaires than any other in the land except New York.

Plantation owners built stately mansions and filled them with furnishings from Europe. The glory faded after the war. Today the golden age has returned with the discovery of oil and gas and the coming of large industries. The splendid mansions have been restored and are occupied by descendants of the original owners.

It was a few miles above Natchez that *Drennan Whyte* sank in 1850 carrying with her a mixed cargo, the most important item of which was $100,000 in English gold.

The water was only forty feet deep and salvage seemed quite possible. But all attempts failed. The eastern bend of the river silted up and became part of a farm bought by an Ancil Fortune from Ohio.

In the spring of 1870, while digging a well, he found the smokestack of a steamboat. He had heard of the *Drennan Whyte* but could not believe that this was it, for it was far downstream from the spot where the treasure ship was supposed to have sunk. Yet it was just possible that a cache of $100,000 in gold might lie beneath his feet and the thought was exciting to a poor man.

He filled up the hole, sowed willow seeds for five hundred feet in every direction, and waited five years.

Then, screened by the willows which grew ten feet high all about him, he started to dig. It was three years before he worked down the side of the boat to a brass plate bearing the words *Drennan Whyte*.

With new ambition he tunneled into the cabins of the vessel. In May of 1891 he uncovered an iron chest, broke it open and found it full of pieces of gold.

While deciding what to do about the money he broke his leg. While he was confined to his bed the river flooded the land, cut away the willow point until not a tree or bush remained, and probably—no one knows for certain—pushed the wreck miles farther downstream. There it lies, but where? Skin-divers still hunt for it.

* * *

Among the bayous of southern Louisiana near the mouth of the great river you journey not only to France, but back in time to the rance of two centuries ago. The French spoken by the Acadians, or "Cajuns," is the old French of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

But you are visiting Spain as well as France. The mouth of the Mississippi was the Spanish explorers' gate to the new world. Alvarez de Pineda sailed up the river in 1519 and was followed 23 years later by de Soto. In the wake of Spanish explorers came settlers, and their descendants are still here.

But chiefly this is a trip to Africa. One might think oneself in one of the better and more progressive of the new African nations, such as Nigeria. Every second man in the state of Mississippi is black, and the negro population is growing much more rapidly than the white. Only a third of Louisiana's population is negro, but it makes a two-thirds impact upon the visitor because of its distinctive character. It represents a curious blend of African tradition

location of every buoy.

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Then, screened by the willows which grew ten feet high all about him, he started to dig. It was three years before he worked down the side of the boat to a brass plate bearing the words *Drennan Whyte.*

With new ambition he tunneled into the cabins of the vessel. In May of 1891 he uncovered an iron chest, broke it open and found it full of pieces of gold.

While deciding what to do about the money he broke his leg. While he was confined to his bed the river flooded the land, cut away the willow point until not a tree or bush remained, and probably—no one knows for certain—pushed the wreck miles farther downstream. There it lies, but where? Skin-divers still hunt for it.

• • •

Among the bayous of southern Louisiana near the mouth of *the great river you journey not only to France, but back in time to* the rance of two centuries ago. The French spoken by the Acadians, or "Cajuns," is the old French of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

But you are visiting Spain as well as France. The mouth of the Mississippi was the Spanish explorers' gate to the new world. Alvarez de Pineda sailed up the river in 1519 and was followed 23 years later by de Soto. In the wake of Spanish explorers came settlers, and their descendants are still here.

But chiefly this is a trip to Africa. One might think oneself in one of the better and more progressive of the new African nations, such as Nigeria. Every second man in the state of Mississippi is black, and the negro population is growing much more rapidly than the white. Only a third of Louisiana's population is negro, but it makes a two-thirds impact upon the visitor because of its distinctive character. It represents a curious blend of African tradition

with the heritage of the days of slavery.

It is largely a matter of terrain. Communities are isolated by water. The folk of one village may never have set foot in a village ten miles away because it is "over the water." The great marshes cannot be crossed even by boat.

These states are being rapidly industrialized and New Orleans is the second greatest port in the nation, barely outstripped by New York. But back among the waters practically the entire population makes a living from the soil or the sea.

Outside the great plantations, which are scientific enough, agriculture is carried on by a system of signs and portents. Leaf vegetables should be planted in the light of the moon, root vegetables during the dark phase. The holiness of Good Friday will bless the beans put into the ground during that day. Moonlight during the Christmas season means a light crop; darkness, a heavy crop.

The talent of the water-world for preserving old traditions is nowhere more evident than in its plant-lore, long since forgotten in France, Spain and England, and on the way to oblivion even in Africa, but still alive in the Old South of the Mississippi bayous.

If the young lady of the house will plant blue vervain around the doorstep she will find that it will attract lovers. The young man who wants to gain control over a woman should chew devil's shoestring and rub it over his hands. Or a little red onion juice mixed with the tracks of a woman's left foot will lure the desired female.

Witchcraft is a constant worry in this strange world of space and silence under the Spanish moss hanging from the oaks. But if a bit of high-John-the-conqueror (St. John's wort) is held in the hand, witches will keep their distance.

The witch and the voodoo doctor are venerated and dreaded. Either may lay a curse upon one, and the power of suggestion is so great that the person cursed becomes ill and may die.

There are many plants supposed to foil witches: a toadstool wet with camphor, or mustard seed planted about the house, or collard seed scattered under the bed, or prince's-feather in the breast pocket, or shame-weed (sensitive plant) to make the conjurer ashamed of his evil ways.

Other powerful plants are jimson weed which, pounded with the dried head of a snake, will bring blindness or death; Blood-o'-Jesus which brings peace; Bowels-of-Christ that can be stewed in lard to

make a healing salve. A cedar tree planted in the yard will mean the death of someone you love.

Ghosts take human form, say the river folk. A roustabout met a beautiful Negress, fell in love, courted her for six nights. On the seventh she failed to appear. On a slip of paper she had given him her address. He tracked it down—and found himself in front of a small cemetery. Her name was on one of the tombstones. She had been dead for fifty years.

Fear of "haunts" and hell fire takes many to church who otherwise would not darken its doors. Religion here is not a cold, calculated thing, but something that requires clapping of hands, hymn-shouting, leaping and rolling. Death may be caused by the breaking of a taboo. A man may die because he brought an axe into the house and did not take it out through the same door. He may have cut too many windows in his house, thus admitting evil spirits. He may have antagonized a witch or voodoo doctor.

Schools are necessarily few in the water wastes. It is not only isolation that has a retarding influence, but language differences. Negroes may speak various dialects of English that would not be understood by a visitor from London or New York or even New Orleans. The many Dalmatians speak Croatian, those of Spanish descent prefer Spanish, and the Cajuns cling to a French unknown in France.

We went from Natchez to New Orleans on the last of the steamboats to take overnight passengers. The *Delta Queen* still makes regular cruises from Cincinnati to New Orleans and from Cincinnati to St. Paul. Behind, a great sternwheel threw up big waves and carried an aura of spray all about it like a veil. A rainbow appeared and disappeared in the vapor. We found the *Delta Queen* a floating hotel in the old tradition of deep comfort and fine food.

The view from the deck was pleasant, although unchanging. That is a characteristic of the Lower Mississippi. For twenty miles and more at a stretch you will see nothing but forest. It probably looks much as it did when La Salle first paddled south.

At Baton Rouge, however, the scene changes. Here the city crowds in upon the river and from Baton Rouge to New Orleans great industries are developing which will make this stretch another Ruhr Valley.

CHAPTER X

NEW ORLEANS AND BEYOND

WE pass under the new Mississippi River Bridge, the third largest of its kind in the world, an unsupported span of 1,450 feet between piers. There are boats all around us now, and ocean-going ships as well. New Orleans, as gateway for the mid-continent, taps half the total area of the United States. Down more than 15,000 miles of inland waterways from thirty-one states come some 5,000 boats with cargo to be trans-shipped to 4,000 seagoing vessels and carried to ports all over the world.

One of the great forces behind this miracle has been International House. It is New Orleans' unique global marketplace. In its Trade Mart, businessmen from many countries meet to buy and sell.

But the tremendous activity of the old-new port does not invade the Vieux Carré where iron lacework balconies look down on Spanish and French courtyards. Here tradition-loving restaurants serve some of the most delicious food in America.

New Orleans is vaguely supposed to be at the end of the Mississippi. But there are 110 miles of river below it where the Mississippi has laid down its modern delta—modern in comparison with the alluvial plain it has deposited over the ages from Cairo south.

The deep delta country is a bewildering mosaic of twisting channels, lakes, bayous (from the Choctaw *bayuk* meaning a small sluggish waterway), swamps and sloughs, rising to dry land near the river and culminating in the levee hugging the shore. The levee is the highest land anywhere, yet it is seldom twenty feet above the water.

The dry ground along each side of the river is at first some miles wide before it gives way to marsh. It becomes more and more narrow to the south and finally tapers to a point at the Gulf. The people who live on it behind the levee also build themselves a rear levee to keep out the storm-driven tidal waves surging up through the marshes.

But people do not live merely on these slivers of land. The marshes are full of islands and every fairly solid island bears houses or even villages, perched on posts. There is nothing on this entirely solid "trembling earth." The land suddenly sinks beneath the feet,

or suddenly swells up into a small hill. Land under water may rise to a height of nine feet or more above it. These "mud lumps," as the deltans call them, have not been completely explained. They may be caused by gas and oil bubbling up from deep deposits They are quite possibly due to the heavy weight of silt delivered by the river which by bearing down upon the soft clays in one area causes a push-up in another.

Lafitte and his fellows did well as pirates and smugglers here. Even today a manhunt through these marshes is considered practically impossible. Forbidden cargoes still find their way through the delta.

We paddled up a twisting offshoot of Barataria Bayou so narrow that the trees sometimes met overhead. Ghostly curtains of Spanish moss waved in the wind. That beautiful pest, the water hyacinth, bordered the banks with purple bloom.

We became temporarily lost in the labyrinth of channels. Now it was easy to understand why the pirates had chosen this water-maze as their retreat.

They had first made their nests in the bays of the Caribbean islands. But there they were never safe from attack. Moreover, it was a long way to New Orleans, the best place to sell their ill-gotten soils. By holing up in the delta they were in close contact with the merchants of New Orleans who did not hesitate to deal in stolen goods, comforting themselves with the fiction that they were not really stolen but captured from enemy ships.

It was convenient to have a few agents through whom booty might be sold to New Orleans traders. One of these agents was a blacksmith named Jean Lafitte—his smithy may still be seen in the Vieux Carré. He was a very unusual blacksmith. Very strong and handsome, he was also an exquisite dandy, polite and polished, and fluent in four languages. Because of his outstanding success as agent for the smugglers, he was made commander of their bayou settlement. Moving to the bayou, he built a fine house, and adorned his person in keeping with his exalted station. At this stage of his career he is described as wearing a huge diamond brooch on his chest, large rings on his fingers, gaudy bangles on his ear lobes, a profusion of decorative chains on his jacket and a set of bowie knives and pistols holstered to his belt.

The pirate nest under his command became a town of a thousand

free-booters and three hundred women of easy virtue. Besides thatched cottages, it was fully equipped with gambling houses, assignation dives and a large slave barracoon—for the corsairs dealt in slaves as well as inanimate merchandise. At regular intervals they transported their captives to New Orleans, boldly set up their market in a city square and sold as many as four hundred in a single auction.

But more difficult days were ahead. As Americans gradually took over control of New Orleans from the French, piracy was viewed with less tolerance. Governor Claiborne set a price of $500 on Jean Lafitte's head. Announcements bearing this offer were posted throughout New Orleans.

They did not stay up long. One night they disappeared and were replaced by posters signed by Jean Lafitte offering $1,500 for the head of Claiborne. The governor set out in earnest to bring the defiant corsair to justice. However, the English were preparing to attack New Orleans. An English naval commander, in a secret meeting with Lafitte, offered the pirate 30,000 pounds in gold and a commission in the Royal Navy if he and his gang would join forces with the invaders.

Lafitte asked for time to think it over. He used the time to notify Governor Claiborne of the intended attack. He proposed to the governor that he and his men would join the American forces on condition that they be pardoned for all former offences.

The proposition was reluctantly accepted, the pirates joined the troops of General Andy Jackson and the Battle of New Orleans ended British ambitions in the delta. The smugglers had fought most valiantly and a pardon for all their past misdeeds was signed by President Madison in 1815.

They promptly returned to their old pursuits. The disillusioned authorities organized an expedition against them, captured their settlement, seized their booty, and committed many of them to the New Orleans jail.

Lafitte slipped through their fingers. According to one report, he died in 1826 on the island of Mujeres off the coast of Yucatan.

Another legendary bayou country character is the gentle Evangeline of Longfellow's poem. The Acadians, people of French descent had been deported from Acadia, later called Nova Scotia, because of the suspicion that they secretly sided with the French in the

French-English wars of the eighteenth century.

The poet's version was founded upon the true story of Emmeline Labiche. When, in 1755, the Acadian settlements were destroyed and six thousand Acadians were scattered far and wide, Emmeline was separated from her betrothed, the young farmer Louis Arceneaux (the Gabriel of the poem).

For years she searched for him. Landing at last on the shore of Bayou Teche in Louisiana, she saw her lover. They are supposed to have met beneath the branches of a great oak tree. It is still there and is known as the Evangeline Oak. But the faithful Emmeline found that her former sweetheart was now betrothed to another. Under the shock she lost her reason and died shortly afterwards. She was buried in the cemetery at St. Martinville and her grave can still be seen.

That extraordinary epiphyte, Spanish moss, came by its name in an odd way. The Spaniards, who had no use for the French scornfully called the plant Frenchman's Beard. The French in retaliation called it Spaniard's Beard. The French outstayed the Spanish, so their name survived, modified in time to "Spanish moss." The plant is known in Spain.

You look in vain for the roots of this strange plant. It has no use for Mother Earth. Like a witch riding a broomstick, it flies on the wind to lodge in the clefts of live oaks, willow oaks, water elms or cypresses, dead or alive, and there its seeds begin life quite independent of the soil beneath. Most of the year it is an unearthly grey, but in April it comes briefly alive. It reluctantly turns from grey to a pale green and puts out tiny yellow flowers that develop into pineapples—or something remotely related to that fruit, for Spanish moss is a member of the pineapple family.

Spanish moss is not only grimly ornamental; it is useful, and every year large quantities are harvested. The delta has its moss pickers and even its moss kings who own fleets of moss trucks and moss boats. The moss must be cured, ginned to clean out all twigs and foreign matter, then baled for shipment. Most of it goes to factories in the East where it is used to stuff mattresses and upholstery.

The moss-draped oaks look ancient enough but they are antedated by the cypresses. These stately trees are cousins of the giants of California, the sequoias and redwoods. Many of the cypresses of

the Mississippi Valley are more than a thousand years old, which makes them the oldest living creatures to look down upon the great river.

Giving an oriental touch to quiet backwaters and bayous is the large, beautiful and fragrant lotus. But the most common flower is the water hyacinth. Eighty years ago there was not a single water hyacinth reported in the United States. Now many waterways once clear are made completely impassable by close serried ranks of this vigorous plant.

During a New Orleans exposition in 1884 Brazil brought in a horticultural exhibit which included a dozen water hyacinths. The lovely tropical plants with their lavender flowers were greatly admired and at the close of the show they were eagerly appropriated by flower-lovers who planted them in water gardens. In an amazingly short time they escaped from the gardens and spread up and down streams and bayous. Boats could not plough through them. Louisiana appealed to the Corps of Engineers to do something.

The Engineers have tried many strategems, but the hyacinths are still unconquered. This means losses both in fishing and in the fur industry. The muskrat will not live beneath a hyacinth mat, and muskrats are big business in the delta. Some six million furs are marketed every year, three times as many as the total from all the rest of the United States with Canada thrown in.

This always has been a land of giants. Here in ancient days the mastodon, elephant and giant sloth roamed, the beaver was seven feet tall sitting down, the bison supported heavy horns with a span of six feet, dragonflies were twenty-nine inches wide and cockroaches a foot long.

The monsters have not all disappeared. The alligator snapping turtle, largest fresh-water turtle in America, weighs two hundred pounds. The sturgeon, which was once a proud thirty-two feet long, still measures eight feet. The paddlefish, sometimes called the spoonbill catfish, is also a living fossil whose only surviving relative is found in the Yangtze. It is as long as a tall man is tall.

An odd fish of the swamps is the grindle, with a family history dating back to the age of the dinosaur and the ability to breathe air and live in mud.

Delta fishermen are at home among the monsters. They even brave the fifteen-foot alligator gar, half reptile, covered with a coat

almost as hard as bone. About one-fourth of the length of this monster is jaw. Yet some ardent sportsmen go after it with only a bow and arrow. The arrow is pointed with a deadly iron spear, eight inches long. The gar is the most ferocious and formidable of all Mississippi fish and does not hesitate to attack any other living thing, including man. Many deaths ascribed to the alligator should really be credited to the gar, as indicated by the fact that human remains have frequently been found in the stomach of this shark-size terror. Real alligators are wrestled out of the water by hand, or caught in traps. Shrimping is big business in the delta. Oyster gathering too is a prosperous industry.

But the biggest fishing operation of the delta is for a fish most people have never heard of, the menhaden, a kind of herring.

Many soaps contain menhaden oil, as do linoleum, paint, varnish. The chicken, beef and pork that we eat were probably raised on feeds containing menhaden meal. The remarkable liquid plant-foods that make flowers grow like magic generally contain menhaden solubles.

Menhaden is the nation's largest commercial fishery. More of these twelve-inch, one-pound herring are taken from American waters than any other fish, twice the poundage of salmon, which holds second place.

Schools of the fish are located by low-flying planes. I saw how it is done, flying east over the marshes to open water. The pilot called my attention to a shadow in the sea. It was a school of menhaden. About a mile away was a ship attended by two smaller vessels called "purse boats." These haul in the catch in great nets.

All day the little planes hover over the sea, spotting schools for the purse boats. The largest catch ever made by this company in one day was 4,200,000 fish.

Another delta enterprise is the trapping of coypu, one of the largest rodents on earth, frequently weighing forty pounds. Although they can be destructive the value of their fur, which is called nutria, makes them profitable.

The world's largest sulphur mine is also nearby, but the really colossal wealth of the delta is in its oil and gas. We flew over the oil rigs that stand in the marshes and in the Gulf itself as far as thirty miles from shore. All personnel are carried to and from the rigs by helicopter. Our pilot said, "The deepest oil well in the world is here at Grand Ecaille—22,000 feet. There are many ten thousand

to fifteen thousand feet deep. One just finished will lower its legs to the bottom of the Gulf, then raise its deck to the height of a ten-storey building."

We see frequent flares caused by the escape of gas from the oil wells. It must be allowed to escape or it may blow up the well. But if it is not set afire it may lie under heavy cloud cover and be a serious menace, exploding if someone drops a match. Therefore it is burnt—enough gas to serve a city going up in flames. It is an odd sight, these great tongues of fire rising from the sea.

In a hydroplane of the Wild Life and Fisheries Commission we flew from New Orleans south over this strange watery waste. Following the river, we came at last to Head of Passes. Here the river splits up into many rivers, spreading out like the webbed foot of a duck, each pass finding its own way to the Gulf.

From the Head of Passes or near it, they set out in all directions over the age-old river deposits, seeking the Gulf. Some of the channels are Main Pass (which is by no means the main pass) Octave Pass, Dead Women Pass, Raphael Pass, Martin's Pass, Pass à Loutre, Seven Pass, Dennis Pass, South Pass and Southwest Pass.

Then, gradually the colour faded and the last grains of soil from Montana and Pennsylvania were laid down. The greatest American river was one with the sea.

THE SECRET OF BAHIA VITTORIA

THE SECRET OF SANTA VITTORIA

a novel by

ROBERT CRICHTON

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THE SECRET OF SANTA VITTORIA

From time immemorial the Italian hill town of Santa Vittoria has existed, a world unto itself, hostile to strangers, wholly involved in growing and making the fat black wine that is its glory and its life-blood. As the Allied armies in World War II approached from the south, the Germans send an occupying force to claim the town's great treasure—one million bottles of wine.

The people of Santa Vittoria devote themselves entirely to carrying out a strategy designed to prevent the Germans from achieving their objective. They confront the Germans' determination to get the wine with the deceptive calm, the cunning and the endurance rooted in their irrepressable vitality

A movie version of this best-selling novel has been produced starring actor John Wayne.

* * * *

Robert Crichton is the author of *The Great Imposter* published in 1960, which became a nonfiction best-seller and was translated into many languages. *The Secret of Santa Vittoria*, four years in the writing, is his first novel. He lives in New York with his wife and four children.

CONTENTS

THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING

The original manuscript of this book was left outside the door of my hotel room in Montefalcone, in Italy, in May 1962. It arrived in the manner of the classic foundling. Wrapped in coarse brown paper and held together by cheap twine, the bundle literally fell into my life when I opened the door one morning. A note pinned to it read: "In the name of God, do something with this."

As with most foundlings, this one was a bastard. The note was not signed, the title page was missing, the manuscript had no professed father. It was not a manuscript at all, but a collection of disorganized notes.

What to label this book has been the subject of argument. The collector of the notes, whom I now know to be Roberto Abruzzi, calls it a history. One note, perhaps intended to be the title page, reads:

THE SECRET OF SANTA VITTORIA
THE DIARY OF A TRUE EVENT

Some important things have been found to be true. There is a town of Santa Vittoria, and the great central incident around which this story revolves, the secret, is history.

Some of the people named in the book are alive and still tend vines on the side of the mountain Santa Vittoria clings to. But others have never existed, including some who are pictured in a good light. Much is made about a green light that burns in the Piazza of the People in memory of the martyr Babbaluche, but there is no such flame. And just when one is tempted to doubt there ever was a cobbler named Babbaluche his name is found carved on a wall in the rock quarry where he is said to have given his life.

The difficulty in finding the truth lies with Santa Vittoria itself. The city, as they call it, is an Italian hill town, one of those clusters of houses which can be seen from any main highway, a huddle of gray and white shapes pressed up against the side of a mountain as if they were sheep fearful of falling off it, which they sometimes do. Some are unreachable except by mule or on foot or by military vehicles, and the towns are as isolated on their mountains as any island in the sea.

The people have no tradition of outsiders and no procedures for handling them. They are not hostile, but they are suspicious and afraid of them. History has proved that to talk to strangers sooner or later leads to trouble or ends up costing money, and so history has rendered them incapable of telling truths to outsiders. They don't lie, but they never of their own will provide the truth. There are people in Santa Vittoria who are capable of denying knowledge of the town fountain when it can be heard bubbling behind their backs.

Santa Vittoria is grapevines; it is wine. That is all there is. Without the wine, as they say here, even God Himself could not invent a reason for Santa Vittoria. My failure in Santa Vittoria is that I was seen thinning their fat black wine with mineral water, and by that one act I had adulterated the meaning of their lives and diluted the result of their sweat. They never even lied to me after that.

As for Roberto Abruzzi, I have never seen him, but I have talked with him. He would telephone me at my hotel and then ask me to call him back so as to save money, and we would talk for long periods of time. Abruzzi is an American who cannot go back to the United States, or thinks that he can't go back, because of something that he did. I am not certain that he is an American. It is possible that he is an Italian who feels that by posing as an American he might find a better market for his notes. The intricacies of the Italian mind, the strategies employed by the poor in hill towns to see themselves through just one day, are not known in this country. But when you read what he writes I think that, like myself, you will believe him.

In return for food and the use of a house he was asked by the people of Santa Vittoria to tell their story and record for them the great thing the people of that city did there in the summer and the fall of 1943. They asked Abruzzi to write the book because, as an American, he was supposed to know how to do such things.

The priest, Padre Polenta, handed him this note one morning:

> Remember this, Roberto. One's words must glide across the page like a swan moving across the waters. One must be conscious of the movement without a thought of what is causing it to move.

It was enough to stop him for a month. His pen, as he told me,

was like the ugly orange feet. The people had contracted for a swan and he was going to deliver a swine. But in the end Roberto wrote what he did because he had a stronger reason for doing it than to satisfy the vanity of Santa Vittoria. As he is willing to admit, he has been a thief about it. In order to tell his own story, which he feels is a shameful one but which he knew had to come out of him before it consumed him, he has stolen the far greater story of Santa Vittoria. Roberto Abruzzi was a deserter during the war, but it is his hope that if he can tell about it, some people might be able to understand him and he might some day be allowed to return to the United States, where he was born, and build a new life again. This is the price that he asks the reader to pay in return for the story of Santa Vittoria. It is not a high price to pay.

Here, then, is the foundling that I agreed to adopt. From that bastard, the ragged bundle of notes of Roberto Abruzzi, has grown this book.

Montefalcone, 1962
New York, 1965

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[illegible], [illegible]
New York, [illegible]

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING

THE hour this story begins is known. The minute is known; the exact moment is recorded. Even the state of the weather is known. To some this might not appear to be remarkable, but when it is considered that there are entire generations in the history of Santa Vittoria about which nothing at all is known, the statement becomes remarkable.

It was Padre Polenta who recorded the moment. He had been working in his wood-lined room at the top of the bell tower when he first saw the light coming down the River Road from Montefalcone. At times the beam of light would be sharp and clear, and then the bicycle would enter a patch of fog clinging low to the Mad River and the light would become a round wet globe, like a lantern dropped in a lake, or the moon before a snow. The light annoyed the priest. Like many people who don't sleep at night be felt the night belonged to him. He left the window of the tower and made an entry in his daily record.

> 1:21 A.M. The goat Cavalcanti on the prowl again. Tell his mother to keep him home before her boy is found dead.
>
> Beneath this he added, in purple ink and underlined three times: The winter fogs have come again. Ha! A new record.

The priest hated the fogs. He lived in the top of the bell tower because of them. He felt that his lungs were lined with a kind of fungus that absorbed water and he had given up a rich parish in the north of Italy and taken this poor place to escape the wetness of the northern winter.

"What about fogs?" he had asked. "Do you have fogs? Some of these mountain towns endure fogs."

The parish committee had all looked at one another as if the word *fog* was one they had never heard before.

"Oh, there are the winter fogs," one of the committee members finally said. "A few days or a week. I suppose you could go away for a week."

"I have a dread of sopping lungs," Polenta had said.

The first year was good, but in the second year the winter fogs came up from the valleys and slid down from the high mountains in October and lasted through the winter until April. With the fogs a bitterness had come to the priest, and it grew deeper with the years. With his last money he repaired the ancient campanile in the Piazza of the People and with good dry wood he paneled the room at the top where the lookouts had once stayed. The top of the tower floats above the fog line, and one day years ago the shepherd moved up into the tower and left his flock below.

After that he came down once a week to say Mass (to celebrate the death of Christ, Babbaluche the cobbler always said) and to give the last rites and to bury the dead, the two sacraments the people claimed Polenta enjoyed dispensing.

When the priest went back to the window for a second time he was surprised to see that the rider had already turned off the River Road and was coming across the cart track that leads to the foot of the mountain and the climb up. There was a moon then, and streamers of moonlit fog shifted in the streets below like bright banners, but they only disgusted the priest. When the rider dipped into the shadow of the mountain, where the road can no longer be seen even from the bell tower, Polenta went back to his work.

It was strange work for the priest to be doing. No one knew about it here until after he died, and then the people were amazed and felt ashamed of themselves for having despised him all along, which was, after all, how he must have wanted them to feel. He was occupied with restoring the Great Ledger of the Parish of Santa Vittoria, in an effort to re-create some kind of history for the people and the city. There are people who feel Polenta did this out of a love that he was unable to show, but others think that it was only an exercise to keep him from slipping back into peasant ways, the lot of many who move to these mountains. The Ledger itself shows it. The young priests arrive here and for a while the Ledger is filled with entries of births and deaths, and each year the entries become fewer and less informative until finally there are none at all for years on end, and the writing in the book, if there is any, becomes unreadable—the young priest has become an old peasant.

There is no passion to the work. Fabio della Romagna, who is the only person from Santa Vittoria to have gone to the university, believes that because the priest was such a stubborn and bitter man,

that once he began it he refused to leave it until it was done. This may be true, but on this one night Polenta had made a discovery that amused him and even excited him. He found that if he took a page from the Ledger, one filled with births and deaths and baptisms and marriages, from one century, and then took a page from a hundred years before or a hundred years later, it was impossible to tell which page belonged to which century. This night he had three pages on his work table, one from 1634, one from 1834 and one from 1934.

The same names were on all the pages. The same first names and the same middle names and the same last names. The same people were getting born and getting married and getting buried, and the same children were having their First Communion and receiving their Confirmation and the same children were dying in the same old trusted ways. The rest of the world might have been changing over those centuries, but it would be impossible to prove it by Santa Vittoria.

Padre Polenta would insist he didn't sleep. For men who claim not to sleep it is important for them not to be caught asleep, as if it were some kind of honor for them to go around with bags under their eyes. But the truth is that Polenta never heard the rattle of the bicycle being pushed across the cobblestones of the piazza and that the young man who was pushing it had to shout four or five times before the priest heard him and went to the window.

"If it's someone dying," the priest shouted down, "he can die just as well in the morning."

"No one is dying, Padre. It's me, Fabio, Fabio della Romagna."

He didn't go away from the window because the Romagna family was one of the few in which the priest had ever been able to find any merit. They donated a fat wheel of cheese each year to the parish and some years a keg of wine.

"What do you want?"

"I want to ring the bell, Padre. I want to wake up the town."

"It will be morning in two hours."

"It's Mussolini, Padre."

"Who?"

"The Duce." Fabio shouted very loudly.

"What about the Duce? Do you want me to come down into that fog for the Duce?"

"He's dead, Padre," Fabio called up. "The Duce is dead."

The priest went away from the window and looked around the wooden walls of the room. It was strange to him. He lit a tallow candle and wrote in the daily log.

2:25 A.M. Cavalcanti turns out to be F. della Romagna. I learn that the Duce is dead.

He took the candle and started down the dark steep stone steps that wound down inside the walls of the tower. Fabio met him at the door. He was tired and wet with sweat, but he was happy.

"You should see them in Montefalcone," the young man said. He described how the people were dancing in the streets and setting fire to portraits of Mussolini and burning Fascist symbols and how the soldiers had deserted their barracks, and the police headquarters had been burned and how even the *carabinieri* had gone to the hills.

"I suppose they'll go after the churches next," Polenta said. "They usually do."

Fabio was shocked. "They're going into the churches to pray, Padre," he said.

"I'm sure."

"To give thanks for their deliverance, Padre."

"I'm sure. Go on, go ring your bells." He allowed Fabio to come into the bell tower, but he wouldn't help him find the bell ropes in the darkness.

The bell began to peal and then thunder over Santa Vittoria, swinging free and out of control, the entire tower trembling and then the windows of the houses around the piazza. No one came into the piazza. Fabio ran to Santa Maria.

"The people," he called to the priest. "What's the matter with the people?"

"You've been away at the school too long," Polenta said. "They don't believe the bell any longer."

The summer before, all the people had run to the Piazza of the People—to help fight the fire, when the bells had begun to ring. When most of the town had collected, torches were lit and they found themselves surrounded by a company of Blackshirts from the barracks at Montefalcone.

"We shall now proceed to pay our back taxes," the officer announced. And they went through every pocket and every house

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in Santa Vittoria until every unburied lira in the city was taken.

"This is no city to catch fire in," the priest told Fabio. "Now when the bell rings, everyone gets up and bolts the door. That's the kind of Christians you have in this town."

There is something about the truth that makes itself understood. When the bells ceased ringing, Fabio ran up and down the piazza in front of the houses, telling everyone to come out, that he had good news for them, and gradually lights were lit and finally some of the Pietrosantos, most of whom live along the lanes leading into the piazza, opened their doors; and when they saw it was Fabio running about in the fog they came out.

They put Fabio up on the steps of Santa Maria. Pietro the Bull, the oldest and still the strongest of the Pietrosantos, hung Fabio's bicycle from the statue of the turtle on the fountain so the beam of his bicycle lamp would shine on the young man. It threw Fabio's shadow back onto the church facade and when he held up his hand before speaking the hand was twenty feet high on the stones.

"A great thing has happened today," Fabio called out. His voice is as thin as his body, but it is clear and it can be heard.

"A great thing for us. A great thing for Italy." The people leaned forward to hear Fabio, because good news is not a common commodity in this place.

"Benito Mussolini, the tyrant, is dead," he cried.

There was no sound at all from the people. The face of Fabio showed that he was puzzled. He asked if they heard him and no one answered, but Fabio knew that they had heard.

"The Duce has been put to death this day," he called.

Still the silence, the only sound the water pouring from the fountain.

"What is that to us?" someone shouted. "What are you trying to tell us?"

"Why did you get us out of bed?" they called. "Why did you ring the bell?"

His face was anguished. It is a fine face, long clean and narrow like the blade of a new axe, the eyes deep and dark like ripe olives, and his hair so dark that it seems blue at times. Fabio's skin is white and fine, not the color of copper pots like most of the faces here.

"What does it mean to *us?*" the first man shouted again. He wanted an answer.

"It means freedom," Fabio said, and he looked down.

The people respect Fabio, but they were annoyed by what he had done. He went down the steps of the church and they cleared a path for him so that he could get his bicycle down from the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle.

"You've been away too long, Fabio," a man said. "We don't go to school here, Fabio. We work. We grow grapes, Fabio. You shouldn't have waked up the people."

"Excuse me," he said. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

"It's the books," a woman told him "You've strained your mind." Everyone nodded, because it is a known fact here that a few books are all right, like wine, but too much can be bad. Books break down brains.

It was the cobbler Babbaluche who saved things, although it is usually his role to ruin them.

"Leave the light there," he ordered. He has a voice which sounds as if his throat was plated with brass; it is always irritating and it is always heard. He limped, because he is a cripple, to the steps of the church.

"I'll tell you what it means to you, your socks filled with shit," Babbaluche began.

There is no point in keeping it a secret. The cobbler is a man who is fascinated with excrement. Under the laws of Italy it is not allowed to put down on paper, even on paper that is not to be published, the things Babbaluche calls the people of Santa Vittoria. He compares our nastiness to that of a man who rises in the morning and finds that the shoe he has just put his foot in has been used the night before as a chamber pot. He can say these things because of something that happened to him years ago in front of all the people and which they allowed to happen. Babbaluche was a penance we had to bear.

"How many of you would like to sink your boot in Copa's ass?" Babbaluche shouted.

There was a cheer then. It was an ambition of everyone in the piazza.

"As of this morning you have that right."

He went through the rest of the city leaders, the members in good standing of the local Fascist party who were known as The Band.

"Who wants Mazzola?"

There was a cheer for the ruination of Mazzola. There was nothing political any longer about The Band. They had long ago ceased contributing to the national party or to Rome. They kept Santa Vittoria for themselves and stole from it, not too much at a time, but all of the time.

The loudest cheer of all was reserved for Francucci. When Copa had taken over the city twenty years before, he had made his one speech.

"Bread is the staff of life," he told the people. "Bread is holy. Bread is too sacred to be left in the hands of greedy individuals. No penny of profit shall ever be made by any individual from the exploitation of the people's bread so long as I am mayor, so help me God."

He closed all of the bakeries in Santa Vittoria and opened the Citizen's Nonprofit Good Bread Association and put his brother-in-law, the mule drover Francucci, in charge. Francucci's first act was to reduce the amount of wheat that went into a loaf and his second was to raise the price. Within a year after that the families of Copa, Mazzola and Francucci moved out of the wet dark caves they had lived in for one thousand years in Old Town up into the sunlight of High Town, where the gentry, what there is of gentry here, live.

"I offer you the ass of Francucci," Babbaluche said. There was a terrible roar from the crowd.

They would turn the irrigation water for the terraces back on. The Band had turned it off years before, when the people refused to pay for their own water. They would fix the Funny Scale on which all of the grape growers had to weigh their grapes before selling them to Citizen's Wine Cooperative.

The people began to get angry. There is a saying here that if you can't do anything about something, pretend it doesn't exist. But now that the people could do something about them, the old hurts that had healed began to hurt again. It is impossible to guess what the crowd might have gone on to do had not Francucci chosen that moment to come down from High Town into the piazza.

"Why were the bells ringing?" he asked. It is asking a great deal to expect anyone to believe that the baker would have come *down* then; one would have to know Cosimo Francucci to understand how it could happen.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" he cried. "Take your hands off me."

They used the baker like a soccer ball. He went from one end of the piazza to the other, and every player along the way had a penalty shot at him. When he could move no more they called his family to come down and take him away, and when they couldn't carry him Fabio had to help them carry him back up the steep lane to High Town, more dead than alive. That is the way Fabio is. When he got back down to the piazza the people were starting back to their houses. The bloodletting had had a soothing effect. As the baker's blood had flowed, the blood pressure of the people had dropped.

"They shouldn't do that," Fabio said.

"The people are entitled to their blood," Babbaluche said. "The people have a need for blood. They have a taste for it. Now give them big blood, important blood," the cobbler said. "Tell them how the Duce died."

"They don't want to hear that," Fabio said. "They want to go home."

"The people always want to hear when the mighty stag is brought to the ground by a pack of common dogs," Babbaluche said.

The cobbler was right. Fabio told them how the Fascist Grand Council had gathered in a palace in Rome the night before and how one man, the Count Dino Grandi, rose to his feet and in the face of Mussolini, before the eyes of the Duce, began to read a resolution.

Resolved: The members of the Grand Council and the people of the glorious nation of Italy, having lost all confidence in the ability of the leader to lead any longer, convinced that he has destroyed the will of the army to fight any longer and the people to resist any longer. . . .

The people sat on the wet stones of the piazza and listened to Fabio.

"Die," one of them shouted. "How does he die?"

Fabio told them how at the end the Duce turned to his son-in-law, husband of his own flesh and blood, and said to him, "And you, Ciano. Flesh of my flesh. Even you."

"Yes, even me. You have done all that you can do."

He told them how they put the Duce in a long black ambulance and took him through the streets of Rome. The Duce tells the guard that he isn't sick and the guard says, "But the people of Rome are fickle."

And how they took him through the ancient burning city, past

all the monuments to the past Caesars, through the arches built for the great men, until they come to the walls of Rome and the Appian Way, the route that all the conquerors have taken to come to Rome. At a cross-roads the ambulance stops and the people of the village look inside.

"An old man is dying," one of them says.

Mussolini says one sentence: "The people of Rome have always destroyed their greatest sons."

And how after that they drove past the country towns and then into the upland villages, the hills and the mountains growing higher, into the Abruzzi and then up into the snow fields into those mountains where the snow never ends. In the valleys it is night, but the snow fields are still touched by sun, and here he is met by four members of the Alpini who tell him to undress and when he is naked two of them take his arms and two of them take his legs and they lower him into a hole they have cut into the hard ice and they begin shoveling snow into the upright grave until only the great head is not buried.

"You dishonor Italy," the Duce says. They are simple men but one of them was equal to the job.

"No, we honor the dead of twenty years by doing what we do."

So in the manner of the Alpini, Fabio tells them, the Duce has died, frozen to death in foreign snow.

When he was through with the story some of the women were crying, not for the Duce, but for the men of Santa Vittoria who were sent to the Alpini. They left one morning in May 1941, twenty-three young men, marching down the mountain, singing and shouting all the way to the Montefalcone road, the feathers on those silly hats bending with the breeze, the people standing on the Fat Wall waving and waving until the last of them could be seen no more. Not one of them was ever seen or heard from again.

We know now that this isn't the way the Duce died, but we always tell it this way because we like his death this way and it is more fitting to us.

There was no way to keep the people in the *piazza* after that, because the sun had come up. It had not yet reached down into the piazza itself, but the people could see it touching the tiles on the roofs of the houses and nothing could hold them after that.

"No one works today," Babbaluche shouted. "A day of holiday."

"A day of celebration," Bombolini called. But the people didn't listen to either of them.

The sun drives the people here. It is an instinct that has been bred into them. Even when they can't see the sun or it can't be seen, in the darkest lanes in Old Town, when the sun comes up the people get up. It drives them out of the houses and it drives them down to the terraces to tend the vines.

"Tell them, Fabio," the cobbler said.

"This is a great day for Italy," Fabio said. "No one should work today."

They poured out of the piazza and down the streets to get their tools, deaf to anything now but the needs of the grapes, and in a few minutes there were only five or six of them left in the Piazza of the People. These men went across the piazza from the church and sat around the edge of the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle, while Fabio climbed up and took down his bicycle.

"For twenty years I dreamed of this day," Babbaluche said, "and now look at it." He swept his hand around the empty piazza. "This is the kind of people you have in this place, Fabio. Don't ever allow yourself to forget it."

"It calls for a drink," Bombolini said, and all of them, at once, as if someone had set off a silent alarm, stood up and began to follow the wine seller across the piazza to his wineshop. He was unlocking the folding iron gate over the front door, when his wife looked out of the window above the door.

"See that they pay," she said to him. "See that you make them pay." He was embarrassed.

"She lacks a sense of history," he said.

It was damp and chilly in the shop, but the warm air from the piazza and the warmth from the wine soon warmed them.

"What do you think is going to happen?" one of them asked.

"Nothing," Pietrosanto said. "Why should anything happen?"

It is the feeling here. No matter what takes place in Rome or happens in the world, for a few days or a few weeks things might be a little different, but they always return to the way they were before.

"The Germans will come," Fabio said.

He had put his head down on one of the tables because he was

tired. He was suddenly embarrassed to be the center of the men's group. He had never spoken much with the men before, and now he was one of them.

"No, they won't," one of them said. "Why would they want to come here?"

"If Italy gets out of the war," Fabio said, "the Germans aren't going to leave Italy for the Americans and the English."

"No," Pietrosanto said. "There's nothing here for them."

"There's nothing here for *us*," Bombolini said.

Fabio could only shrug his shoulders. He couldn't push too far, but still he told them about the tanks and armored cars he had seen coming into Montefalcone.

"Montefalcone is Montefalcone and Santa Vittoria is Santa Vittoria," the cobbler said. "One is a jewel and one is a shit house."

They drank to this.

"Only a man born in Santa Vittoria can ever learn how to make a living out of it," one said. "What would the Germans do here?"

They drank to this as well.

The wife of Bombolini came down the back stairs and into the wineshop and she looked at their glasses of vermouth and anisette and she stared at their eyes.

"Did they pay?"

"They paid," Bombolini said.

"Let's see the money." She went to the drawer in the table by the big wine barrel. There was nothing in it.

"This is a historic day," Bombolini said. "You don't ask for money on a day like this and you don't accept it."

They nodded their heads at Rosa Bombolini. They were afraid of her. She has the toughest tongue in the city and no shyness about putting it to use. She studied them.

"What a bunch of patriots." She began taking the glasses from them moving them toward the door. "Take your patriotism out into the piazza where it belongs." When they were in the sunlight at the door she said, "That's the trouble with this country. The whole place is filled with penniless patriots."

They could hear the sound of a drum coming down from one of the lanes in High Town that lead down into the piazza. Capoferro the town crier was announcing the Duce's death.

Since the wine was gone and the drum was no longer playing and

it was hot, they began to leave and soon only Fabio and the wine merchant were left in the piazza besides the children and the oxen and the old women getting water from the fountain. They had nothing to say to each other.

"The best thing I can do right now," Bombolini said, "is to go back to bed. Goodbye, Fabio."

It was the end of the celebration. Fabio was alone. He decided to go down into Old Town and sleep on a mat in his cousin Ernesto's house and he crossed the piazza and started down the steep Corso. It was very hot now. The door to the furnace of Africa, as we say around here, was open.

The house smelled. In truth, it stank. Ernesto was no housekeeper. There was a pot of hard cold beans over the fireplace and although they were hard to swallow Fabio ate them with enjoyment.

"So this is my feast. This is the reward," he said aloud.

He found a mat and cleared it off and stretched out on it and looked up at the smoke-darkened ceiling. There was no sound at all in the city, not a cock or a child or an ox, and Fabio fell asleep. It was now nine o'clock in the morning.

This then was the extent of the celebration of the death of the dictator. Thus did the twentieth year of the glorious reign of the Everlasting Imperial Fascist Empire come to a close in the city of Santa Vittoria.

Fabio woke in the early afternoon. He was still tired, but he woke because he was hungry. He looked around the small house, but there was nothing in it to eat, not a piece of stale bread or hard cheese. He was sorry he had eaten all the cold beans. He left a note for Ernesto. "Ants would starve to death in your house if ants would come into it," and he went out into the Corso Mussolini and started up it toward the Piazza of the People to try to buy some bread and cheese and wine. The midday sun blinded him and he was forced to hold onto the walls of the houses until his eyes could adjust to the glare. When he reached the piazza he was conscious of groups of people standing about in it looking back down toward Old Town, but he was too blinded to see what it was they were looking at.

The Piazza of the People is the center of Santa Vittoria. It is a flat plateau of cobblestones that divides the city in two parts. Above the piazza is High Town where the houses sit on a saddle

of land in the sun. No one knows why the city wasn't built there in the first place. The people who live in High Town are called Goats. The people who live around the piazza are called Turtles because of the fountain. Below the piazza is Low Town, or Old Town, where the Frogs live, because in the spring, after a rain, little green frogs hop in the dank, moss-green streets until the rats and the cats and the children get to them. On a tourist map, although tourists don't come here, Old Town is listed as the Medieval Section which makes it sound better. Frogs almost never marry Turtles and Turtles don't speak to Goats. That's the way they are here.

The city is steep. The Corso Mussolini, which runs through Old Town up to the Piazza of the People, is so steep in places that the street becomes flights of stone stairs. The Corso runs down to the Fat Gate which is the main passage through the Fat Wall which the Romans began and which someone else finished and which runs all of the way around Santa Vittoria. There is another way out, the Thin Gate, but this is used mainly by small boys and goats since the track that leads down the mountain from it is so steep.

If you stand in the center of the Piazza of the People, where Fabio was standing, you are almost at eye level with the second pride of Santa Vittoria, the one achievement of the Fascist movement here, the tall soaring cement-skinned water tower which rests on three great long thin steel legs like the head on the top of an enormous spider. Written on the cement tank in black block letters were these words:

MUSSOLINI IS ALWAYS RIGHT

On the other side, although little of it could be seen from the piazza, was

DUCE DUCE DUCE DUCE
DUCE DUCE DUCE DU

Below the tower in Old Town, near the Thin Gate, was the first pride of the city, the Citizen's Cooperative Wine Celler, and on the roof of the celler was a large blue and red sign which read "Cinzano" since most of the wine made here is sold in the end to the Cinzano family.

Fabio could see none of it. In the wineshop his problem was reversed. In the shop it was dark and he was blinded again. He had passed Rosa Bombolini, standing in the doorway with her arms crossed and staring toward Old Town, but she had not followed him when he entered the shop and he was forced to feel in the darkness for a chair. He waited for his sight to return and as he sat he heard someone crying.

"Can I help you?" Fabio said. The girl didn't answer him. "Do I bother you?" He waited. "Is it you, Angela?"

"Yes, it's me."

He tried to say something that would sound helpful or sensible, but he could think of nothing to say to her. Nothing at all. Not any single word would come to him. He closed his eyes and tried to force one single word to come and nothing came, only her name, and he knew that wouldn't do.

There was this about Fabio then. Although he had never actually spoken to this girl alone or said her name aloud before or heard her say his name, he was in love with Angela Bombolini. This kind of thing happens here more often than in other places. There is a kind of love here that is called "thunderbolt love."

"Why are you crying?" he said at last.

"You know why," Angela said. "Why are you torturing me?"

He found himself turning red once more and wondering what it was he did that caused him to harm the person he least in the world wished to harm.

"I don't know why," Fabio said.

"Him," she said. "You saw him."

She nodded her head in the direction of the door and the piazza beyond. He went across to the window and cleaned a section of it and looked out. The groups of people were still in the piazza. He could see across the piazza and down toward Old Town, toward which all the people were looking, even though he was forced to look over Rosa Bombolini's broad shoulder. He could see nothing at first, but finally his eyes were able to pick out the movement and he felt his heart jump. He could feel his heart at that moment actually rise in his chest and touch something in his throat, as if he had a live fish in his chest.

"Oh, Mother of God," Fabio said. He made the sign of the cross. "What is your father doing up there?"

Two-thirds of the way up the water tower, still at least one hundred feet below the concrete tank and the safety of the little iron railing that runs around it, not moving at all now, silhouetted against the sky and the mountains beyond Santa Vittoria, gripping the little thin, narrow, rusty ladder that climbs up to the tank itself, clung Italo Bombolini.

"What is your father doing up there?"

As soon as he said this for a second time Fabio knew two things: that someone was going to have to help Italo Bombolini and that it was going to be himself.

"Why does it have to be me?" Fabio said aloud.

He was astonished and ashamed that he had said it aloud. He turned away from Angela then. The figure was moving once more, moving with a terrible slowness upward.

"He's going to be all right. I've climbed mountains. I know how people climb. He knows his way around up there."

She began to cry again.

Fabio went outside and tapped Rosa Bombolini on the shoulder.

"Do you have a length of rope? A good strong one?"

"Oh, no," Rosa Bombolini said. "You don't risk your life to save his fat pride. He's going to fall. Let him fall."

"He's still going up."

"Because the son of a bitch can't come down," she said, and Fabio turned red again. He had never heard a woman talk about her husband or a man in this fashion before. "He's going to come down in that piazza like an ox falling off a roof."

"I'm going whether you get me the rope or not," Fabio said.

In the end she got him a rope. She got him two good lengths of rope and she also came back with a basket containing cheese and some olives and two bottles of wine and a *fiasco* of *grappa*, the strong raw brandy the peasants distill here.

"I can't carry all of this," Fabio said.

"Angela will meet you in the Corso with a knapsack." Signora Bombolini said. Angela passed them then, still crying, and because she was running she was forced to lift up her skirts, and despite the fact that it was a matter of life and death, all that Fabio could seem to keep his mind on was the quality and condition of her legs, that they were so strong and well-shaped and so brown and clean-looking.

"Why are you so red?" Rosa Bombolini asked him. "Are you sure you are all right?"

I am very much all right, Fabio thought. I am about to save the father of the woman I love, and she will be grateful to me for the rest of my life. He broke into a trot, although he knew he should save his energy. He met Angela Bombolini at the curve in the Corso Mussolini down below Babbaluche's house.

"Let him fall off," the cobbler told him. "It would be a public service to the city."

Angela handed him a black knapsack made of imitation leather that had once been the property of the Young Fascist Scouts, and the outer flap of which read: "This sack belongs to Bruno. Don't touch or *death*." On the other side, burned into the leather, was: "Believe Obey Fight—Your Duce."

It caused both of them to laugh.

"I'll pray for you, Fabio," she said. It was the first time he had ever heard her use his name.

The ladder shocked Fabio. He had not looked at it in many years, and he was frightened to see how narrow and inadequate it was. It was not a ladder at all, but long lengths of pipe, five or six inches around, which were joined together and into which small round iron spikes had been fixed, at intervals of six or eight inches, to serve as foot and hand holds.

"Don't look up, Fabio. Just go up," someone said to him.

The iron grillwork of the catwalk that circles the top of the water tower had been burning for half the day and it was hot to the touch, but Bombolini never felt the burning when he crawled up onto the walk. He sank onto the iron and almost at once he slept. He had no intention of ever getting off the tower. He had prepared himself to die. He even yearned for the release of dropping softly down through the softness of the afternoon sky. He knew the people in the piazza were waiting for his last performance and he wouldn't disappoint them, but at the moment he was too tired even to contemplate dying. That would have to wait until he woke again, unless he rolled off the walk while he slept. Until then he lay stretched on the iron slate and burned.

When he did wake he was conscious of three things. His eyes were pressed against the open slots of the grillwork and he could see from the shadows of things far below him that time, a good deal of time,

had passed. Part of his body was in shadow. He watched an ox plod along a track through the terraces. The road was ankle-deep in dust, and white and bone dry, and it looked as if it had been drawn through the green terraces by a piece of white chalk. At each step a plume of dust spiraled up behind the cart and hung in the still air of late afternoon like a white banner.

I am thirsty, Bombolini thought. I am dying of thirst.

He could see the people working on the terraces in the vineyards, deep among the vines, working in the shaded tunnels of fat, green grape leaves, resting in the cool of the wine-green shade. And he could hear the sound of water bubbling by his ear, just on the other side of the thin concrete skin of the water tank.

I am being driven crazy, Bombolini thought.

And finally he became conscious that someone else was on the tower with him. From the other side of the tank came a rhythmic sound, a soft and steady lapping like waves on the side of an anchored boat.

Before I roll off I will find out who is on the tower, he told himself. He tried to say something, but there was no sound. He tried to move and found that it was impossible. I can't even kill myself, he said to himself, and he sighed, and then his eyes saw the wine bottle, the cork out of the neck, standing at attention like a little soldier a few inches away from his hand.

I will drink a little of this wine and then roll off, he told himself.

The wine was hot from the sun, but the heat didn't bother Bombolini. He would feel the wine run down his throat and enter his stomach and then begin to course through the bulk of his body as if it were the sun itself. The second swallow was easier and each one after that became easier, every mouthful exploding inside him. He could feel it go *poom* in his stomach. The wine was working for Italo Bombolini the way a transfusion works for a man who has lost too much blood. When he was through with the bottle he found he could sit up, and he leaned against the concrete and all at once allowed his legs to drop over the side of the catwalk, which caused a great shout from the piazza.

"Who's on the tower?" he said.

"Fabio."

The sound stopped but then it resumed, the *slap, slap* of the paintbrush against the concrete.

"I knew it would be Fabio," Bombolini said. It was an effort for him to talk. "If anyone would come for me I knew it would be Fabio. Fabio?"

"Yes?"

"God shower His blessings on you, Fabio."

Fabio was unable to answer. Things like this embarrass the people here. It might be all right for Sicilians, but not here. They are very emotional and vulgar and sentimental, much too emotional for us.

"Let me see you, Fabio."

"No. When we both are on the same side the catwalk starts to fall off."

"Fascist bastards," Bombolini said. "They cheated on the specifications. They were supposed to put up a ladder and they put up that pipe and pocketed the difference. They were supposed to put a platform up here and they put up this thing. How far are you now?"

Fabio had already painted out MUSSOLINI IS ALWAYS RIGHT and was halfway through the eight DUCE's.

"Four more to go, eh?"

"Yes. Whoever did it, overdid it," Fabio said.

"I did it," Bombolini said.

Fabio was silent. It embarrassed him to think of a man risking his life to climb a tower and write DUCE DUCE DUCE all over the side of it. And he could not imagine this man as ever having been young.

"I was young once, you know. I was tall and lean. I used to look like Garibaldi. I had long shiny-black hair. I wonder what made it curl? Ah, well. When I was through I wasn't even tired."

Fabio went on with the painting.

"I know what you're thinking, Fabio. You don't have to tell me," Bombolini said. "But you have to try and understand how it was then. It wasn't like this now at first, Fabio. He was beautiful at first, Fabio. He was promises for us."

They felt the tower tremble and they gripped the iron railing, but then it passed. The mountain rises and falls here, a little bit each day, like a giant shifting in his sleep.

"And what promises, Fabio. I don't mean the stupid ones like building the army and making Italy fierce again. They were going

to help us build a school and pay for teachers. Everybody was going to join in. They were going to help us build a road, and we were going to plant the hillsides with grass and trees so the land would stay on the hills and the water would stay on the land and there would be no more landslides. We *believed* that, Fabio. Oh, there was excitement then, Fabio. Everything seemed possible. And we believed."

"How could you?" Fabio said. "You believed because you wanted to believe."

"Yes. And because he believed, too. I really think Mussolini believed."

"And then none of it happened."

"Some of it happened. This thing, this tower, happened. Oh, we were going to be like America here, Fabio. Look." The wine seller pointed although Fabio could not see him. "Can you see Scarafaggio from where you are?" Fabio said that he could. "When the tower was built they fell down in the streets with envy from looking at us. 'Our turn next,' they said. 'It's happening. The miracle is happening' ".

He told Fabio of the famous morning when the tower was to be dedicated. The dignitaries had come from Montefalcone in cars and been taken up the mountain in oxcarts decorated with flags and flowers. A great flag had covered the top of the tower and when the string was pulled and the tank was revealed, there, shining fresh and black in the morning sun, was MUSSOLINI IS ALWAYS RIGHT and all the DUCE's, and on the catwalk was Italo Bombolini.

"I was a hero once, for a few days, and then they turned the water off," Bombolini said. "After that I was a fool."

When the leaders from Montefalcone had gone The Band assumed control of the water tower and began to charge for the water. When the grape growers refused to pay, the water was turned off, and soon the cement spillways began to fill with leaves and dirt and the people went back to the old way, praying to God to send rain, and He was, as always, not quite generous enough. But the people forgot about the tower.

"Yes. Two more DUCE's and one DU."

"I ran out of paint. No," he said, "it wasn't Mussolini himself at first. We didn't blame him. It was the water. The country might have been falling apart, but we couldn't see it. You know what The

Master says. 'Men are apt to deceive themselves in big things, but they rarely do so in particulars.'"

"I don't know who The Master is."

"Niccolò Machiavelli," Bombolini said. "He's my master. Have you studied him?" Fabio said that he had.

"Well I read him. I memorize him," the wine seller said. "I have read *The Prince* forty-three times."

The young man was astonished by this information, and he didn't believe it. His father had once told him that beneath Bombolini's clownish exterior there was a better mind than anyone could expect, but Fabio had never been able to see any sign of it.

"I don't suppose there is any more wine?"

Fabio thought about it. If Bombolini got drunk it might be the end of them both, and yet the wine had made the journey down seem possible. He opened the knapsack and uncorked the second bottle of wine and slid it along the catwalk.

"God shower blessings on you, Fabio. Rain them down on you. Flood you with them, Fabio. God drown you in blessings." And he began to drink the hot red wine. They were silent while he drank.

"When I'm through with this bottle," Bombolini said, "I'm going off this tower, Fabio."

"Oh no," Fabio said.

The men and the women were on their way up from the terraces by then. Wherever Fabio looked he could see people coming out from the shadows of the vines onto the track that comes up the mountain from the terraces. A great number of them were already up the mountain. Fabio by then had reached the bottom of the bucket and was on the last letter. It was strange, but there was exactly enough paint left to paint out the last letter, a *U*, and not a brushful more.

"Now throw the bucket," Bombolini said. Fabio threw the first bucket far out over the town, away from the piazza, out over the Fat Wall so that no one could get hurt.

"Now the brush." He threw the brush. There was a shout from the crowd. He threw the cheese, the olives, the second bucket, and each time the crowd roared and the noise grew louder and by the time Fabio threw the knapsack the piazza was in an uproar.

"All right, let's go now," Fabio shouted. He had counted on the excitement to stir the wine seller. He came around to the side of the

catwalk where Bombolini sat, and as he did the rusted iron bolts that had been drilled into the concrete years before suddenly cried out, *screamed*, in protest. He ran along the narrow walk and past Bombolini and on to the spiked pipe so that his weight was no longer on the catwalk. Now the people in the piazza were silent. There was no sound from the city at all.

"They don't want you to fall, do you see?" Fabio said. "If they wanted you to fall they would be shouting for you."

While he talked he reached up and began to work the lengths of rope under the arms and across the back and around the waist of Bombolini. His plan was crude, but Fabio felt it might work. He would tie the wine seller to the pipe, literally lash him to it, and then bring him down it spike by spike. He would place Bombolini's foot on the next rung, or spike, below and then work the ropes down around him and the pipe and when he was secured there he would lift the next foot down. He would bring him down, all bound with ropes, like a bear being brought down from the high mountains. He made Bombolini slide along the narrow catwalk until he was at the pipe and then dip down until his feet could find the spikes to stand on. Even from where they were, so high above the piazza, they could hear the people suck in their breaths. When he was tied to the pipe they didn't start at once, because both of them were tired even then.

"Why are you doing this for me, Fabio?" Bombolini asked. Fabio didn't answer him. How could he mention Angela? He wondered if he would have been on this pipe now for anyone else's father, but then he realized that only Angela's father would be doing such a thing.

"Why?"

"Because you were a man in trouble. It is people's responsibility to help others in trouble."

"Oh, Fabio," Bombolini said. "I don't know where you get ideas like that. It is people's responsibility to look after themselves and nothing more. Let us try a step."

In the Leaders' Mansion they could hear the shouts from the piazza, and the cheering. The noise was now steady and they knew the crowd was growing, but none of them was ready to believe that the cheering was for Italo Bombolini.

"Why would Pelo tell a thing like that?" Mazzola asked.

"Because Pelo is a bastard, that's why," Copa said.

Pelo had come back from the Piazza Mussolini and when no one in the Piazza of the People was looking he had knocked twice on the door as directed.

"Who are they cheering?" Vittorini had called.

"Bombolini." Vittorini could not believe his ears.

"Italo Bombolini," Pelo said. "The wine seller. The wine merchant. The Sicilian boob."

"I don't believe you," Vittorini said.

"But it is the turth," Pelo said, and then he had run.

And ever since then the noise had grown louder and with it had grown the need for The Band to know who was the leader so they could plan some kind of counteraction.

"But suppose it *is* true," Dr. Bara said.

"Then we will have to deal with Bombolini," Vittorini said. "In a war one doesn't choose one's enemies. If an insane mob has chosen Bombolini then we have no choice but to deal with the man the mob has chosen."

"Ah, well," the doctor said, "we will soon find out who the leader is, whether we want to or not." And Francucci began to weep again.

"I want the priest. I want my priest. I want to make my last confession," the baker said, and then some of the women began to weep as well.

"Shut up and start acting like a man," Copa shouted at him.

"I don't know how," Francucci said.

"He's right though," Vittorini said. "We need the priest. Every member of the *fiancheggiatori* must be united for the common defense."

The *fiancheggiatori* is the alliance of the Crown and the Vatican with the bureaucracy and big business which forms the traditional combination of power in this country. The man who can keep the *fiancheggiatori* satisfied and in balance with one another is said to hold the key to the kingdom. It was one of the postmaster's favorite word, but as Babbaluche pointed out one day the only thing missing from the combination was the people. They sent a young boy into the piazza to go to the bell tower and summon the priest.

"Tell him someone is dying," Mazzola said. "That will be sure to bring him."

They put Francucci in a far corner of the cellar, in the deepest part of the darkness, but even from there he could be heard, saying it over and over like a litany in the church.

"They are going to roll me in flour and sprinkle me with water. They are going to put me in an oven and bake me like my bread.

"They are going to roll me in flour and sprinkle me with water. . ."

"No, I don't believe it," Mazzola was saying when the boy came back with the priest. "I refuse to believe it. No mob, even a mob from thic city, would be insane enough to choose Bombolini for a leader."

But Padre Polenta told them the same thing, and they were forced to believe it.

"Yes, it's true," the priest said. "The people are cheering Bombolini."

"But why? Why Bombolini?"

"It is in the nature of mobs to cheer fools," the priest said. "Now where is the dying man?"

Doctor Bara waved his hand around the room.

"Everywhere," he said. "All of us. It is only a matter of time."

There was a great shout from the piazza then. The force of it was so strong they could feel its weight on the door. And each shout was followed by one after it and then another, like soldiers on the march. The shouts grew so loud and so steady that Francucci himself could no longer hear his own litany.

The shouts were the counting. Fabio had gotten Bombolini three quarters of the way down the pipe when the counting began. Someone in the piazza had counted the number of rungs that still remained and when there were fifty of them the people began to shout the number left.

"Thirty-four, thirty-four, thirty-four."

Another step.

"Thirty-three, thirty-three, thirty-three."

They could hear it all the way up the Corso Mussolini, they could hear it through the barred doors and the stones of the Leaders' Mansion. They could hear it from every corner of the Piazza of the People, although they didn't know what it meant then.

"It's starting again," Dr. Bara said in the cellar. "They're getting ready to come again. It's stronger now."

Dr. Bara had no fear for himself. It was his belief that the people

would be too selfish to harm their only doctor. "You had better have a plan," he said.

"I have a plan," Vittorini said. He said it so vigorously that the feathers rustled and it was reassuring. "I will make him take our surrender. It is now a matter of timing," the old soldier said. "Timing is all."

"And don't allow ourselves to forget one thing," Dr. Bara said. "The Italian soldier is a master at the art of surrender."

It made them feel better, all of them, and the feeling lasted until they heard a noise, the noise, one so strong that they felt it, the loudest noise almost certainly ever heard until then in Santa Vittoria.

He had gotten down, by himself, to the last spike on the pipe and then his feet had touched the stones of the Piazza Mussolini. At that moment there was a great cheer and he had fallen forward and they caught him before he hit the stones and began to carry him to shove him actually, through the mass of the people in the piazza toward his cart. They put him up on a great solid two-wheeled Sicilian cart, made of iron oak with oak wheels rimmed with iron, painted pink and blue and covered with sweet religious sayings, and when the hands released him he fell off and had to be caught once more and put back up onto the seat, where they propped him up so that he wouldn't fall again. It was at this time that he said the eight words that were the occasion for the greatest single sound in the history of the city.

"Free wine for the people of Santa Vittoria."

He slumped down in the seat, face forward, and it is doubtful if either he or Fabio ever heard the sound itself that greeted the words, although it soared up the Corso and it cascaded into the Piazza of the People and it thundered against the door of the Leader's Mansion and it caused the stained-glass windows of Santa Maria of the Burning Oven to tremble.

The Corso is steep and narrow, and it was hard to get the cart moving, because not enough people could get behind it. But a crowd also has a will that makes itself felt, and just the sheer pressure of people, the desire of the crowd, seemed to be enough to start the cart moving upward. At the stone steps the men were forced to stop and rock the big iron-rimmed wheels back and forth to get up over the stones, and as they did they began shouting—*"Bom"* as they went forward, *"bo"* as they rolled back, "li-i-i-i" as

they strained up over the stone, and a short, explosive "*ni*" when they made it over the lip to the next step. The people behind the men pushing the cart took up the shout, and soon the Corso and then the whole of Santa Vittoria was vibrating with it. They could hear it in the highest part of High Town—"*Bom bo ii-i-i-i ni! Bom bo ii-i-i ni!*"—and over the walls and in the high pastures. One old woman who was watching oxen said it sounded like the start of a great storm and made her afraid, and Luigi Longo, who was coming back from another town after fixing a pump there, said it sounded like a trombone announcing the angel of death.

Vittorini had not been idle. In the Leaders' Mansion they were ready for Bombolini. They stood behind the heavy oak door and listened to the shouts of the people and waited for the proper moment. The barricades had been pulled aside and the door was opened a crack to allow Vittorini to see into the Piazza of the People and behind him were The Band.

Before anything else, they saw Bombolini's head rise from the Corso Mussolini, up toward the piazza, and then they saw his neck and his shoulders and then they saw the top of the Sicilian cart and finally as the cart came up into the Piazza of the People, they saw the bodies of the people pushing him.

"My God," Dr. Bara said. "He comes like a king from the East."

He was above them all, riding along above them, swaying back and forth above them, as if he were floating on a restless sea. The people were still shouting his name, and they came flooding out of the confines of the Corso, spilling out into the vastness of the piazza and around Bombolini and the cart, like the first wave of a tide.

Someone in the Leaders' Mansion moved toward the door then, but Vittorini held him back.

"Not yet, not yet," he shouted.

"*Now!*" Vittorini commanded.

The door of the Leaders' Mansion was thrown wide open. The old soldier was the first to go through it, his sword pointed directly out in front of him with the flag fluttering in the wind that blows every evening in this city.

Copa came behind him, the imitation gold of the mayor's medallion glinting in what still remained of the sun. Mazzola held up the key to the city of Santa Vittoria. After him came Dr. Bara, and with Bara was Padre Polenta with the silver crucifix held aloft for

everyone in the piazza to see, and then came the women holding up the statues and the holy pictures and the old and young women with the babies held up or at their breast.

"Now!" Vittorini shouted again.

He lifted up his sword so that the flag was overhead, the priest lifted up his crucifix and began to wave it up and down. Mazzola waved the key, and Copa flung the medallion up and down, and all the pictures and all the statues and all the babies waved up and down.

Nothing happened. The cart continued out into the piazza. Allow this much for Copa. He is a man for action, and action was required.

"The sons of bitches," he shouted to Vittorini. "They try to ignore our surrender."

He ran back into the Mansion and when he came outside again with the gun, the cart was no more than ten feet away from the fountain. He unloaded his first shot from the double-barreled shotgun over the crowd in the piazza and the second was even lower, so low that several people were cut and stung by the bird shot. The movement in the piazza stopped, the pushing ceased, the pressure on the cart stopped.

And allow this much for Bombolini. Although he was drunk and exhaustion had stolen much of his sensibility, it was he—of all the people in the piazza standing there with their mouths agape looking at the smoke curling from the end of Copa's gun and watching the wind ripple the feathers of Vittorini's hat and Vittorini's flag—who knew at once what was taking place.

There is a line by Machiavelli which Bombolini has written on a card and carries with him.

> Fortune is a woman. It is necessary, if you wish to master her, to take her by force before she has a chance to resist.

Give this much for Bombolini, then. He saw his fortune and he raped her on the spot.

"To the Leaders' Mansion," he called.

There was a moment when it seemed that the marriage might never be consummated. The will of the crowd was for wine. But the people had a decency about them, they were willing to wait for their wine and with a great effort, with an agonizing slowness, the cart was turned and the people in its path were pushed aside,

and Bombolini and the Sicilian cart began to bounce along the cobblestones of the piazza in the direction of the Leaders' Mansion.

"By the powers vested in me by the legitimate government of the city of Santa Vittoria," Vittorini began. His voice like that of, all good soldiers, was loud and carried command.

What Dr. Bara had said about the Italian soldiers and surrender was correct. Vittorini and the rest of them were impressive in defeat. The old soldier talked for almost one half hour without, as anyone could notice, taking a breath. Since they didn't understand the purpose of the talk, the people in the piazza didn't understand the words, but they liked to hear them because they were beautiful and Vittorini was full of eloquence and his sentences flowed like rivers and his words glided like swans on still waters.

It is not necessary to put down all the details. It is enough to know this: that in exchange for a sacred and a solemn vow by Bombolini that the persons and the property of those who had gone before—which meant The Band—would be respected, he, Italo Bombolini, would be handed the key to the city and the medallion of the mayor would be placed around his neck.

"Do I so have your sacred and solemn vow?" Vittorini said. "Remember, it is witnessed by the priest and thus by God Himself."

Someone prodded Bombolini.

"You so have my solemn pledge," Bombolini said. Vittorini turned directly toward the people in the piazza then. While Polenta sanctified the pledge by making the sign of the cross, Vittorini lifted his sword and the flag.

"Citizens of Santa Vittoria," he cried out to them. "I give you your new leader."

Bombolini turned around on the cart and back to his people and said something to them, and this was followed by an enormous cheer and a great surge of movement.

"And what would you call that if he isn't the leader?" Vittorini said. "They would have torn us apart."

The women lowered the holy pictures and the statues, and Padre Polenta began to walk back across the clearing piazza to the bell tower. The others turned around and started back inside the Leaders' Mansion, because one of the promises Vittorini had made was that they would be out of the Mansion by sundown that evening.

The wine seller had said four words: "And now your wine."

CHAPTER II

BOMBOLINI

This is the place where I enter the story. It is the price I ask you to pay in return for hearing the story of Santa Vittoria, which is admittedly a better story than my own. It is something that I have wanted to say to my own countrymen, *my* people, for twenty years; an apology written in the hope that some will understand and even that if enough understand I might some day be able to go back to my home and rebuild what is left of my life. I will try to make it short and make the price as inexpensive as possible.

On the morning that Fabio told the story of the death of Mussolini, after it, while he slept, I was flying in the *Odessa Darling*, a B-24 Liberator bomber, somewhere over Italy. I have figured since that we might have crossed almost directly over Santa Vittoria at eight o'clock that morning, although no one here recalls a plane passing over that morning.

I already knew the fate of Mussolini. The pilot of the *Odessa Darling*, Captain Buster Rampey, had told me about it before we took off that morning.

"They kicked out that Muzzlini, you know that? What do you think about it?"

I shrugged my shoulders. I thought nothing about it.

"I just thought you might want to know," Captain Rampey said. "I thought you might want to be the *first* to know, you know? You bein' Eyetalian and all like that."

"No, sir."

"I just *thought* you would."

"No, sir."

It was our fourth mission, and the first over the mainland of Italy. We had bombed Pantelleria and Lampedusa and some other island I have forgotten, but this was to be the first flight over Italy.

The other members of the *Odessa Darling* didn't trust me. One night after he had been drinking in the Officer's Club Captain Rampey came and found me in my barracks.

"Tell me one thing true, Abrussi. If you was to see an Eyetalian plane in the air you wouldn't fire on it, would you?"

I told him that I would.

But I was accepted by the rest of the crew as a built-in handicap, like an engine that never functioned right. They even had a plan for me called Plan Paisan, in case of an attack by Italian planes. Lieutenant Marvell was to leave his post as navigator and to man my machine gun. There was nothing personal about it.

Then some time that morning, while passing over a patch of dark pine woods, the *Odessa Darling* flew into a grove of budding flak—puffs of black smoke and little flowerings of metal. The sky bloomed with them. I had thought we were through this dangerous garden and all of the bursts were behind us, when the plane leaped in the air as if it were suffering a convulsion. The plane shuddered and we started down all at once, in one great sudden dip, as if someone had pulled a plug in the sky.

"Please, Jesus, don't let there be fire," someone said.

At the end of the drop the plane began to skid through the sky, slipping across it as if we were being towed on a wire cable, going down but across the sky at the same moment, and then there was a thudding sensation, a series of bumps when I thought we were brushing the tops of trees or mountains and then we held, the plane had gotten a hold of the sky again.

He was a good pilot. It is strange now to think that I owe my life to Captain Rampey.

For a long time we flew in silence, trying only to hold the plane in the sky, fearful of trying to turn or to even lift the plane. We flew on, low, and the mountain towns came floating up at us and then faded away like islands in a high green sea. After a period of time—how long it was I couldn't say or even guess—we began to edge up in the sky again and much later Captain Rampey began to make the turn back again, to wheel the *Odessa Darling* around in a huge slow arc in the sky.

Then Rampey called to Marvell.

"I want you to pick me out a nice little town on the way back. One directly on the line to home."

I could see Lieutenant Marvell checking his maps from where I stood at my post. He was a careful worker.

"I got you one," he said after a while. "We won't even have to bank for it. Name of . . . name of . . ."

"I don't *want* to know the name," the captain said. "Just tell me before we get there."

"Yes, sir."

"We didn't come this far for nothing."

"No, sir."

"Got to ditch these bombs *some* place."

"Yes, sir."

When we were five minutes from the target area Lieutenant Marvell announced that it was time to begin to ease the *Odessa Darling* down.

"I don't see anything," Captain Rampey said.

"It's just on the other side of that mountain," Marvell said.

"You wouldn't trick me," Rampey said.

"Sir!"

The *Odessa Darling* started down.

"Going to get us some *paisans* today."

It was a good-sized town, a city really, about three or four times the size of Santa Vittoria. It was on the other side of the mountain, but on a smaller mountain of its own, below the taller mountain, and it covered the crest of it, all white and orange tiles, ringed by a wall, so that in the sunlight it seemed to be a crown on the crest of the mountain.

"Marvell?"

"Sir?"

"You picked us a *jewel*, hear?"

There was trouble with the doors of the bomb bay; some of the flak had damaged the mechanism that controlled them. The bombardier tried to work them open, but before he succeeded we were already over the city.

"I can get you a target further down the line," Marvell said.

"No, I want this one," Rampey said.

They unscrewed the barrel of my machine gun and began to use it as a lever to pry the doors open. We were low then, and I could see the city clearly. The piazza was crowded with people and stalls and carts and animals. It must have been market day. At one end of the piazza was a large building, much like here, that I took to be the town hall. At the other end stood the tower of the cathedral of the city.

"There's your aiming stake," Captain Rampey said.

The shadow of the *Odessa Darling* slid over the town, across the wall and over the piazza and the church facade, over the orange roofs, turning them for a moment a dark red, and then over the

other wall, like a dark messenger. We have a saying in Santa Vittoria: "Good is recognized only when it goes away, evil when it comes." But, in this case at least, it wasn't true. When the shadow crossed over them the people looked up; some just went back to their work and some of them waved to us.

When the bomb bay doors opened the *Odessa Darling* swung around and came back for the town. Captain Rampey didn't wait for the cathedral after all. When the plane passed over the city walls he said, "Kick 'em on out," and all of us became bombardiers. We rolled the bombs through the door and pushed them through and kicked them out with our feet, and they began to follow each other down upon the city, wig-wagging back and forth the way the bombs do, swimming along after each other like fish in a school.

You try to follow the bomb that you personally sent on its way, one that felt the touch of your hand or your foot, and you think that you do; but when the explosions begin and the stones and the roofs and then the fire and the smoke begin to erupt you realize that you will never be able to tell exactly what you have done.

We were low enough to see the confused game the people in the piazza were playing. At each explosion—the explosions seemed to walk across the town with giant strides toward the piazza—the people would run in one direction, and at the next they would turn back and begin to run toward the place they had just left.

Eventually they must have found their heads, because the second time we turned and came back over the city the people in the piazza were gone.

This was the run on which the 500-pound delayed-action demolition bomb would be used. This is the heart and even the very soul of the *Odessa Darling*.

"You have it ready and I'll tell you when," Captain Rampey told the bombardier. He was an expert at this, a genius at it perhaps, the owner of a very special talent that God had given him and which could be used only once or twice in a lifetime. If it hadn't been for war Rampey might never had known he possessed it.

"Now," he said; and on that word the bomb was pushed out. For a moment it seemed to fly along with the *Odessa Darling* before arching over the town and suddenly dipping down, and as it did, every one of us, even the ones without the fine instinct of Captain Rampey, could see that it was going to be a success.

It appeared when it reached it to just touch the gray slate roof of the cathedral and then to go through it so swiftly that the hole it made in the roof seemed to close behind it the way water does over a rock. It was a delayed-action bomb and with a bomb such as this there is always the fear that it might not explode, but then this one did, somewhere down among the dark cellars and in the foundation where a great many people from the piazza must have been hiding. The first sign of success was not the noise of the explosion or the sensation of pressure from it that can at times lift a plane into the air and drop it down like a boat when a wave runs beneath it, but the sight of the front of the cathedral, the entire facade, the great circular stained-glass window that had once been the front of the cathedral, coming apart all at once, every piece seeming to come apart at the same instant and flowering out onto the stones of the piazza. After that, the fire began, a spurt of flame from the bowels of the church that took a great part of the slate roof with it, and then the sound, so that when we began to pull up only the far walls of the cathedral still stood.

"That concludes the program for the afternoon," Captain Rampey said.

The shadow of the plane was leaping over the green fields, and behind us the city was burning like a crown set afire.

"I will tell you one thing," Marvell said. "We did us a job of work."

Those were the last words that I remember hearing on the *Odessa Darling*. I have no recollection beyond that, but I must have done all the things that must be done to cut oneself loose from an airplane, as complicated as cutting the umbilical cord that ties the baby to its mother. I have no recollection at all of stepping out through the bomb bay doors or of pulling the rip cord on my parachute because at that moment I had no desire to do it. My first recollection is of dropping down onto Italy, the rays of the late afternoon sun glowing in the white nylon of my canopy as if I were hung to a silken lantern.

I struck the terraced side of a mountain that was no longer farmed. The earth was hard, the earth was clay and rocks, and when I hit it I heard a bone snap in my leg and a little later I felt it. The cooling air of the late afternoon caught in my canopy and I began to be dragged down and across the old terraces until I finally became caught in some old vines and was held there by them. I pulled the

parachute around me and made a nest for myself as a wounded animal would do.

Later, in the night, I was wakened by some small dark men who smelled of manure and wine. They said nothing to me. They lifted me up and put me in a large basket that stank of earth and manure and grape mold and they put the basket on the back of a mule and took me back up the mountain I had landed on. I thought they were going to kill me, and I didn't care then. I was in great pain. I was now a deserter. I was alone. Of all the Americans I knew I had for some reason declared my personal end to the war and I was ashamed of myself. Who was I, to have attempted such a thing? The arrogance of my act overwhelmed me and I would close my eyes and soon as I did I would see the burning boy. As I look back on it now, there was very little reason to wonder why I wanted to die.

They kept me in a little hut made of branches and twigs and straw, out in the middle of a field. I have no idea for how long. They fed me some kind of white runny goat cheese and hard bread and bitter olives and wine, and if it hadn't been for the wine I think I would have starved to death. One night they came and got me and put me in the basket again and toward morning, when I could stand it no longer, I heard the clop of the mule's hoofs on stone, and looking up from the basket I could see the roofs of houses and I knew I was in some sort of town. They dumped me here then, in the shredded old grape basket, in the Piazza of the People at the door of the Leaders' Mansion. Italo Bombolini was mayor of the city, as I was to learn, and he had already been mayor for several weeks by then and perhaps for longer.

Two weeks after Italo Bombolini had taken over as mayor of Santa Vittoria, everyone—with the exception of the priest Polenta, who despised him, and the cobbler Babbaluche, who wasn't prepared to see him as he was—recognized one thing about him. Bombolini was a *leader*; he was a born leader, he was a natural leader. He was, at times, an inspired leader.

His leadership was so natural and he seized power with such grace that people who only several weeks before could not say his name without first prefacing it with "boob" or "fool" began to realize they had seen these traits of leadership in Bombolini all along.

From his first day Bombolini seemed to have a feeling for the correct thing to do.

He had the streets swept. He had the fountain repaired and the water-catch cleaned of all its mold and moss and all the old glass and potato peelings that washed around in it cleaned out and thrown away. The third morning, the people woke up and found that all the old slogans in Santa Vittoria had been changed in the night. The one in the Piazza of the People that read

BELIEVE OBEY FIGHT

had been changed to

TRANQUILLITY CALMNESS PATIENCE

The three great virtues of the Italian people

A public service
(Signed) Italo Bombolini, Mayor

On the old fallen wall of the Chapel of the Bountiful Grapes the old Fascist party slogan "I Don't Give a Damn" now read

WE CARE

In High Town where for years the sign had read

LIVE DANGEROUSLY
—D-Annunzio

Bombolini had added:

BUT DRIVE CAREFULLY
—Bombolini

Although there were no cars in Santa Vittoria then, it gave the people a feeling of belonging with the times.

As you went down the Corso Mussolini it had been impossible to avoid the sign on the wall of the house where the Corso curves down to the left:

BETTER TO LIVE ONE DAY AS A LION THAN 100 YEARS AS A LAMB

Today when you go down the Corso you read

BETTER TO LIVE
100 YEARS
—Bombolini, Mayor

The trouble with government in this country is that it is composed of the Ins and the Outs. There are blacks and whites, but no grays here. When the Outs get in, they kick all the Ins out, and the new Outs do everything in their power to destroy the programs of the Ins, even when they might help them. It is brutal and sometimes bloody and almost always exciting and usually no good for the town, but that is the way it always has been.

Bombolini's genius, for that is what it must be seen as now, was that instead of throwing people out he invited everyone in. He formed the Grand Council of the Free City of Santa Vittoria and in two days every faction that could be counted upon to be fighting one another, every family and every force in the city, had a member in the government. Everyone was an In or had a member of the family who was an In. Membership in the Council was almost evenly divided among Frogs and Turtles and Goats. Half of the members were young, and half of them were old, and every one of the large or powerful families was represented. The real secret was, perhaps, that if not everyone was In because that was not possible, almost no one was Out.

Giovanni Pietrosanto was made Minister of Public Waters, which meant that he was in charge of the fountain and the water tower. Under Giovanni's direction the spillways were cleared and the pump was put back in working order by Longo, and all the drains on the terraces were cleared and patched, and for the first time in twenty years there was water on the terraces for the grapevines. It isn't a great deal of water, but it is enough to keep a dry spell from becoming a drought, something that Someone greater than Bombolini had not seen fit to do.

Under his brother Pietro, the other powerful member of the family, the organization called Minute Men of Santa Vittoria was formed.

"Why do you want to waste your time on this?" Fabio asked Bombolini.

The mayor held up his hand. " 'The chief foundations of all states are good laws and good arms.' I have no say in the matter. The Master says we must have an army."

At the start people laughed at the army, but as they drilled in the Piazza of the People after work and the twenty men got better at their drill, the people began to turn out to watch them. Pietrosanto has a voice that can break windows, and the drill was impressive. Every soldier was allowed to wear a red arm band on Sunday and to sport a hawk's feather in his hat, and soon every young man in Santa Vittoria was hungry for a feather, but the army was held to twenty because that was the number of weapons we had.

There were others. Commissioner of Sanitation, Master of the Scales, Minister for Bread and Pasta, Minister for Advanced Education, Minister for Affairs of the Aged.

He closed the second meeting of the Grand Council with these words: "A wise man once said, 'The first impression one gets of a new ruler and his brains is from seeing the men he has chosen to have around him.' " He put down his hand. "Men of Santa Vittoria. By these standards I submit that I must be judged a genius."

At first they felt that Bombolini was being egotistical, but as they went home and the words rolled around in their heads and they began to see what they meant, they were, of course, flattered. And as Bombolini had told Fabio, if you can't buy your way by money the next best way is to buy your way with flattery, because as every Italian knows, flattery will always get you somewhere.

This much should be said at once. Although Fabio della Romagna, for a time at least, later came to hate me, if it hadn't been for Fabio I would have died. The first people to find me in Santa Vittoria that morning assumed that I was dead. One of them felt my legs and when he felt their coldness, since the blood had run out of them hours before, he took my shoes. When they sent news of the body to Bombolini he agreed with the people that it should be taken at once, before the sun was fully up, and buried some place in the rock quarry under the stones. He woke Fabio, and Fabio came down the steps of the Mansion of the Leaders to see about

taking me to the rock quarry, and he took one look at me in the grape basket and knew that I was alive.

Instead of taking me to the quarry, they took me upstairs into the Mansion of the Leaders and put me in a bed. I have no idea of how long I stayed there. Three or four times a day the girl, Angela, came and held my head in her lap and spooned broth and pasta and soft sopping bread into my mouth, and sometimes she poured me a small glass of wine. I had no idea that I ever would get well, nor any hope that I would. I leaned toward death. The bone in my leg had joined together, but it had come together all wrong. I would lie on the bed for hours at a time in darkness and never make a move. When it was light in the piazza, I never knew whether it was because the sun was going down or coming up.

After some time, a week or two weeks, I began to realize that, with no effort on my part or any consciousness of it, I was beginning to understand all the shouting and calling that I heard from downstairs and from the piazza. The language of my father and mother was returning to me. I had learned it as a small boy, but later, although it was spoken in the house, I had unlearned it. I wouldn't speak to my family in anything but English and I wouldn't listen to them unless they spoke to me in what we called American.

The people would talk in front of me the way they talk in front of idiots and the deaf and small children. Only once did I come close to revealing myself.

Bombolini and Fabio were in my room with some young men who wanted to look at me. Everyone in Santa Vittoria came to look at me at one time or another. There is very little to do here, and I was an object of curiosity. They felt my clothes, and some of them even rubbed their hands along my back or arms. I used to wonder which one of them had my shoes. I never have found out. Whoever took them will keep them in the family until I am dead, for fifty years perhaps, and when I am gone they will come out into the open with them, probably at my own funeral. That is the way they are here.

The young men were about to leave, I had bored them, when one of them looked down into the piazza from my window and said, "Oh my God, the Malatestas are back."

They all ran to the window and knelt down by it, since it is a low window and looked down into the piazza. The sound of their voices

and the way they sucked in their breaths made me interested.

"It's the tall one," one of them said, "the snotty one. What's her name?"

None of them could remember at first. They all had a nickname for her, the Colt, Long Legs, the Icicle. Bombolini called her "the hawk."

"Caterina," one of them finally said.

"Caterina," everyone said. "Yes. Caterina."

She was crossing the Piazza of the People toward the street that leads down from High Town and because she was wearing city shoes on the cobblestones she didn't walk the way the other women here walk. The women here walk as if they were carrying a burden. It is not unpleasant to watch. They move slowly, with a kind of slow graceful power to the walk, and the motion of their bodies is as much side to side as it is forward. Both were graceful, the women of the city and this Caterina Malatesta, but their graces were of different kinds. This is not meant to demean the women of Santa Vittoria, because some of them are very beautiful, but the difference was that between a work horse and a race horse. Each has its use in the world, and its beauty, but one was meant to be used and worked and one was meant to be admired and to be ridden lightly.

She carried two suitcases and although they appeared to be heavy no one made any effort to help her with them, and she didn't ask for any. The women waiting in line at the fountain all saw her, but they gave no sign that they had seen her. I know little about clothes, but her clothes were of the kind that even a very ignorant person recognizes as the kind that cost money and are what is called high style.

"The Germans must be giving them hell in Rome," Bombolini said.

"They only come back when they're in trouble."

"They must have put her husband in jail. What was his name?" No one knew.

"They must have killed him," someone said, and they all nodded and were silent for a moment.

"Look at the way she walks. Zip zap zip. Like she's saying go screw yourself."

"She's a beast. She cuts the balls off men. She's no good for anything. If you married her you'd have fun in bed and starve to death,"

they said about her. There is a saying here: What you can't have, abuse. And this is what they were doing, but I didn't know it then.

"But she's very beautiful," I said, in Italian, and not one of them noticed. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

Sometime in the night, unseen and unheard by us, a great storm, a battle between the heat of the south and the cold of the north, had been waged up there, and now in the morning rivers of white flowed down the mountainside. When Angela came in with the broth I said, "If you go to my window you'll see something beautiful."

She put down the broth and went to the window and crouched down by it and that moment she looked very beautiful to me. I had not noticed that she also was beautiful in the way of simple things.

"I don't see anything," she said.

"On the mountains. There's snow this morning."

"Ah, the new wind." She turned back to me. "The new wind has blown summer away. It's good for the grapes." She spoke to me in dialect and was not at all surprised that I could answer her back or understand her. "Cool nights now and warm days," she said. "It brings out the sugar in the grapes."

"Aren't you surprised at my talking?" I asked.

"We were wondering when you would begin to talk," she said. "After all, you've been here for weeks."

"But I talk rather well, don't you think?"

She shrugged. "Little babies can speak at two years of age. You're a man."

However, she went downstairs and told them that I was now talking and while there was no surprise about the miracle of my tongue there was interest and even excitement, because now they could do business with me. Bombolini, followed by some other members of the Grand Council, came running up the stairs to my room.

Although the mayor had not stayed to listen to me speak on the first day, nothing could seem to stop him from coming back on the days that followed and I became sorry I had ever opened my mouth in the first place. He came in the afternoons when I was asleep and at night, and he stayed until I fell asleep in his face, asking me questions about how they did things in America, about the government and the setup of the states and the ruling of towns and the conduct of the police and the courts and the making of laws and

the collecting of revenues—until I came to dread the sound of his step on the stairs. More than the intrusion and the effort involved was my shame at my ignorance.

"I don't know about that," I would say. "I can't answer that. I never studied it, I never found out about it."

"It's a wise man who can say 'I don't know,' " Bombolini would say. "Good man."

The few answers I was able to give him he speared the way a beggar spears chunks of meat in his soup. He fished them out before they could get away from him and then he rolled them around in his mouth, savoring them, before finally swallowing them.

"Brilliant," he would say. "These are brilliant things you tell me."

It came so that I couldn't bear the sight of Fabio's face at such times. It was Fabio, however, who was finally able to figure out why Bombolini acted that way toward me. He had already figured out the reason for Bombolini's amazing success at government that had changed him from a clown to a prince in one night. When faced with any problem or any decision, Bombolini would not become alarmed by it but would go back to *The Prince* and *The Discourses* and have Niccoló Machiavelli provide him with the proper answer. It was from these books and this man that he drew his wisdom and his assurance and his poise and his strength. Bombolini was only a face and a body and a mouth for The Master. All of the answers weren't in the books, of course, but the important thing was that Bombolini felt they were and, believing that, he had no fear and suffered no qualms.

But somewhere along the line there were problems that even The Master couldn't provide answers for, and it was for this reason, and for no love of me, that Bombolini turned out to be such a formidable fighter in my behalf when the affair of Babbaluche the cobbler and Abruzzi the American threatened to tear the Free City of Santa Vittoria apart and bring down its government.

Life has changed little here since the days when Machiavelli went sourly through the streets of Florence, and yet some things have changed and it was these gaps in the Master's knowledge that frightened Bombolini. To close them he needed a representative of the New Ways, someone forged in the fire of the New Culture, as Fabio says he put it. And who better than me, a dropper-in from the New World? For the purposes of Italo Bombolini, for his well-

being and his assurance, it was essential that I prove to be brilliant and he made certain that I was. As soon as I was able to stand with the aid of a crutch the cobbler had made for me I was invited downstairs to sit in on sessions of the government and after a week I was invited to join the Grand Council as a full member, as a minister without portfolio, to advise on current affairs.

This was the state of things when Babbaluche came up onto the terrace of the Mansion of the Leaders one night during a meeting of the Grand Council and came into the middle of the meeting and began pointing his finger at me.

"Look at this son of a bitch," he said. "Feast your eyes on him."

They looked at me and I think I blushed, because I had always felt like a fraud at the meetings in the first place. I felt naked before them.

"Because of this son of a bitch each one of you stands to go to jail and to lose your vines."

It was the loss of the vines that struck fear in their hearts.

"Do you know who this bastard is? Do you know what he represents?"

I felt they had discovered that I had been a deserter, and I looked down, which didn't help my image before the people.

"This son of a bitch is an enemy of the state."

"He seemed like a good man to me," Giovanni Pietrosanto said. "That's all that I know."

"An enemy of the state."

The argument was that, despite the fall of the Mussolini government and the emergence of the Badoglio government, America was still at war with Italy, and by making me a member of the Grand Council each member was guilty of treason and infamous acts by collaborating with the enemy.

"You are collaborators," Babbaluche told them. "Do you know what they do to collaborators?"

Everyone knew what they did. They took away your home and they impounded your land and they tore up your vines by the roots.

It would have been understandable for Bombolini to have deserted me then, but he fought for me. They sent me from the room and I soon fell asleep, so I never heard the debate. The debate raged on during the night, and I understand that it was bitter, because no one has ever volunteered to tell me anything about it. Sometime early in

the morning it finally became a question of confidence in the government and its leader. The issue was whether to turn me over and be safe or to keep me and run the risk of losing their vines and even their lives. Who could have trust in a government that had any doubt about which course to take? At dawn Babbaluche rose and began to read from a paper on which he had been writing.

> RESOLVED, That the people of the glorious Free City of Santa Vittoria, having lost all confidence in the ability of the leader Bombolini any longer to lead . . .

They voted after this and no one has ever told me the count, so it must have been close. No one likes to tell me how close they came to putting me in the cart and taking me to Montefalcone. But whatever the count was, Italo Bombolini managed to do what Benito Mussolini failed to manage.

I have heard that there was not much honor in the victory. All kinds of things were promised in return for all kinds of votes. I have heard, for example, that I was described as a rich young man who might come back someday and in thankfulness endow the city with such things as schools and fire departments. But perhaps that isn't true; to this day I don't know. None of it has ever bothered Bombolini, because he had done the one thing all Italians learn to do above all other things: he had endured.

For show they put me under house arrest and they sent notice of my presence to Montefalcone by way of Fungo, an idiot here, who would make certain to lose the message and lie that he had delivered it to the *carabinieri*. They took away my membership in the Grand Council and I became an ex-minister without anything.

There was never a serious challenge to Bombolini after that. I was his low mark but he had survived, and in surviving he strengthened himself. That next day, in a show of strength, he had himself named Captain of the People instead of Mayor, an old and honored title in this region, and after a time even Babbaluche came to call him Captain.

Those months, the summer in Santa Vittoria, were good. There was hunger in Italy but there was no hunger here. There were shortages in everything but there was no true hunger. There was still good wine to trade and sell. Most of the wine here is vermouth,

which is a blend of wines and aromatic herbs, and the vermouth we make is good. It is not boasting to say this or lying to say it. This is a history and it is a simple and recognized fact that the wine made in Santa Vittoria is one of the best in the world.

The vermouth is aged for a year or even two years, depending on the amount of sugar in the grapes and the amount of acid, on the time of month the grapes were picked, the position of the moon during the harvest and the whisperings of the gods of the grape into the ears of Old Vines, who alone here can hear them. Usually most of this wine is sold to the Cinzano family, who sell it all over the world, but because of the war the wine was still in Santa Vittoria. When we needed food three or four carts were loaded with wine from the Cooperative Wine Cellar and sent to Montefalcone, where there was always a market for our wine. The carts would come back up the mountain the next day filled with flour for bread and pasta, with bags of onions and salt and peppers, green peppers and red peppers, with tins of sardines and mackerel from Sicily, with balls of cheese and wheels of cheese, whole carts filled with artichokes, sometimes boxes of cherries and baskets of fruit from the north, dry pork sausage, salami, black olives and green olives, cheap black wine in big wicker baskets, since our own wine is too good to drink every day—one basket of ours for three of theirs—baskets of beans and lentils, and tins and jugs of olive oil to splash on our bread. When the carts came back up the mountain you would not know there was a war on in Italy.

But something was happening in Italy. The feeling could even be felt up on the mountain. There had been a time when two or three trucks in a morning was considered to be traffic on the Montefalcone road, but now the sound of trucks and half-tracks and even tanks could be heard from the River Road all day long and far into the night.

"You should see what's happening in Montefalcone," the men who went to get the food would tell the others. "There are more tanks in there than there are people. There are more Germans than our own people."

We felt it, but it didn't concern us. There was good and the weather was good and the grapes were fattening on the vines like pregnant women. The people in Santa Vittoria looked up at the sky as a source of danger, for the signs of a sudden heavy rain or even

a hail storm, more than they looked down at the road to Montefalcone.

If the Italian nation was in danger of coming apart, the city of Santa Vittoria had never felt closer together. And for this, Italo Bombolini must take all of the credit. He had embarked the city on a program for greatness.

Bombolini began by changing the names of all of the streets. There were public hearings, there were contests among the children and the young and the old of the town, there were votes and re-votes, speeches and arguments, until the city was in a state of civic uproar and excitement.

In the end the Piazza Mussolini became the Piazza Matteotti, named for the first famous victim of the Fascist regime. It was a very popular decision. We were surprised to find after the war that five hundred other Italian towns had done the same thing.

The Corso Mussolini became the Corso Cavour, because it sounded good and every town must have something named after Cavour.

Then came the whole rest of the *Risorgimento*. There is never any problem naming anything as long as the names of the *Risorgimento* are recalled. Streets were named for Mazzini, for Garibaldi, for the Redshirts. One street was even named for Vittorio Emmanuele, and when no one was sure exactly which number was the good Vittorio the number was left off and now stands for any Vittorio Emmanuele you may desire.

The effort was a great success. It had cost nothing, but had brought the people closer together. Perhaps the only saddened person was Bombolini himself. When the last of the streets and piazzas and lanes was named and there were no more left, Fabio found Bombolini sitting in the darkness of the large room in the Leaders' Mansion, which that morning had been renamed the Palace of the People.

It is said somewhere that the art of art is to make the work seem artless and this is what Captain Bombolini did with Santa Vittoria. With the exception of Fabio and occasionally myself, no one had any idea at all of the work and thought that went into the things that he did and how much of himself was in them.

It was Fabio who saved my life, and it was Fabio who was responsible for getting Caterina Malatesta to repair the bone in my leg.

I didn't understand it at the time, but he wanted my leg made well so that I could go away from Santa Vittoria.

"You're a soldier and a soldier must make every effort to rejoin his own men so that he can continue the fight," Fabio told me. I nodded.

Bombolini himself had gone up to High Town to see the Malatesta, as they called her, and she had laughed in his face. Even after that, as shy as he was, Fabio went to see her, and for reasons we don't know the Malatesta agreed to come and see me. It is measure of how desperate Fabio must have been.

She was not a doctor in the sense that she had a license to practice in Italy, but she had gone to medical school in Rome until the final year, when her father, to save the family, forced her to leave school and marry a very rich young Roman, of a noble and influential family, who was a rising Fascist and a friend of Count Galeazzo Ciano.

Her family had once been a great family in this region. Once they held large holdings of land, but they began to lose it, plot after plot, in all the ways a family destined for disaster can find to lose its land. They had no love for the land, and worse, no greed for it, and no one can hold onto land around here without it. There are too many who want it too much. At the time of the marriage they were reduced to a few parcels of land and several houses in the region, one of which was in High Town and which various Malatestas retreated to from time to time to lick their wounds. When they would leave they would leave the house an unspeakable mess. The Malatestas didn't seem to know how to live any longer.

When she came into my room she never really saw me. She took off the smelly bandages that Dr. Bara had put on the wound, and took them off with no gentleness, and threw them on the floor. I was ashamed of my wound because it stank and I began to apologize for it to her. That is the effect she has on people. She didn't hear me.

"This wound will have to be opened," she told me. "The infection will have to be cleared up and the bone will have to be rebroken and set again."

"If you say that it has to be done."

"It doesn't have to be done. If you want a leg it will have to be done."

"I want a leg."

"It will hurt a great deal."

"It hurts a good deal now."

"It will hurt a *great* deal."

I shrugged and she smiled at me, which confused me.

The Malatesta came back several days later, with no warning. She came with some local anesthetic and a bottle of *grappa* with Fabio as a helper, and a half hour after she arrived she cracked the bone in my leg. There was, as she had promised there would be, a moment of "superior" pain (it pleases me to this day to think that she was impressed when I didn't cry out), and she began to reset the bone. During all of that time she never said one word to me to make me feel like a man or even as if she were working on a human being. At the end of it she said, "You lie in bed for one week and then you get up and try and walk. The sooner you walk on this the better it will be for you." She went to the door of the room and turned and looked out the low window into the piazza. "But I doubt that you will do it," she said.

It was this, of course, that sent me stumbling out into the Piazza of the People, my face stiff with pain and running with a cold sweat, exactly one week after the Malatesta had come into the room with her *grappa* and her rubber hammer.

The more I walked the stronger the leg would become. It had withered until it looked like the leg of an old man, and I began to go down through the streets and finally all the way to the wall and the Fat Gate and down onto the terraces.

The people liked me down there. I gave them an excuse to stop their work and talk. I had the strongest feeling that I had been in all of these places before, in the town and on the terraces. I seemed to know everything in advance, and there were no surprises for me. I think now it must have been caused by all the images left in my mind, even when I wasn't listening to them, by the talk of all the people from "the other side," from "the old country," who sat around the table in my mother's kitchen drinking coffee and wine and anisette and telling about the old days and how their children were falling to pieces in America.

In the end I would make it a point to go all the way down the mountain to the foot of the terraces and then to rest in the enormous ancient wine cellar at the base of the mountain before forcing myself to climb up again.

This was one thing that was different. I had never seen anything like the cellar before, and I came to love it for its coolness and quiet. It had been built by the Romans and then sometime in the Middle Ages it had been rebuilt entirely and so it wasn't the goal for tourists that it might otherwise have been. It had finally been abandoned in the eighteenth century.

There were two cellars actually, and one day this was to mean a great deal to Santa Vittoria. There was a small opening in the mountainside which led into an enormous room, hollowed out of the mountain itself, which was called the Great Room. It was as large as the inside of a cathedral, and I have no idea why they ever built such a room, unless in Roman times it had been used as a temple to some god of wine. From the back wall of the Great Room two long, deep wine cellars were cut into the bowels of the mountain. I didn't go into the cellars themselves, because they were humid and I could sense that they were filled with water, but the Great Room was cool by the entrance and I would lie on the dry sand and take a nap before going back up.

I soon found that I was the only person in Santa Vittoria who ever went into the old wine cellar. They were afraid of the spirits who lived in there. Everyone in Santa Vittoria has some story about some member of his family who strayed into the tunnel in a sudden storm and the terrible things that happened to them in there. They feared for my life, but when nothing happened to me it didn't lessen their belief in the evil spirits but only convinced them that Italian spirits and ghosts were not interested in non-Italian people.

During the week that I had spent in bed before walking I had worked on the radio of Vittorini, the mail clerk. They had brought it to me to fix because I was an American and Americans are supposed to be able to fix new inventions such as radios. I knew nothing about radios, but there is a certain logic about anything that is broken. Sooner or later there has to be something that isn't connected, and if it can be connected, as with my leg, then perhaps it may be made to work again. I finally got it to work. In those days we received an hour of electricity a day from the power station at San Rocco del Lago. Some days it never came at all.

But on one day when it did come I heard a broadcast from Egypt that was sent to Italy by the English. The Americans, they said, were almost all the way across Sicily and the invasion of the mainland

was to be expected any day. I grew very excited about that, and I shouted out the news before I realized that the last thing I wished then was to be liberated. But it didn't matter in any case. Fabio had no interest, and Bombolini, even though he was from Sicily, listened to me without really understanding the words.

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startled by the presence of an officer in their quarters and they got to their feet in confusion.

Along one wall of the room were buckets of glue and brushes and rolls of posters, this one showing a German soldier helping an old Italian woman across a busy street. The captain pointed to them. "You won't need those any longer," he said. "We are at war with Italy."

Some of the soldiers smiled, and some waited to see what the proper action was supposed to be. The captain took this chance to examine his detachment. It was the first time he had seen them all together, and it was not a reassuring sight. There were only eight of them, and all had been seriously wounded and were now on limited duty. The senior of them, Sergeant Gottfried Traub, had been hit in the face by shell fragments, and the muscles had been severed, so that the captain found it impossible to know what the sergeant was thinking from his expression. He had reached one conclusion, which was that the sergeant appeared happier when he wasn't smiling at which time his face became distorted.

"We're all going to become soldiers again. No more glue pots," the captain said. Once again the men didn't know how to take the news.

He took out the map of this section of Italy. It was so typical and correct, von Prum thought, that the only reliable map of the whole area had been sent to him by his father from Mannheim.

"You will note," he said, "a good German map and so we are safe. At least we will be sure to wind up in the town we have been sent to take."

His slender finger touched the city of Montefalcone. "We are here." The soldiers, who were timid about doing it at first, began to gather around the map. "We eventually will be *here.*" Traub touched the name on the map.

"Sanda Viddoria," he said.

"Yes. Santa Vittoria," the captain said.

"Ah, yes. Sanda Viddoria," the sergeant said.

Long before Fabio reached Montefalcone it had grown dark. Walking the River Road in the dark is hard, but the darkness had brought the traffic out, hundreds of cars and trucks and half-tracks moving by the little light of hooded parking lights, all heading south and he

could see by them. He was forced to the side of the road, but he could see. A few soldiers riding the trucks shouted at him and made gestures at him and one or two actually aimed their rifles at him, but Fabio failed to respond. He was no fun for them.

At the gate into the city, still guarded by an Italian and a German, Fabio felt they would arrest him, but he didn't really care about that.

"You're not going to learn much at the academy," the Italian guard told him. "It's closed."

He only shrugged and they passed him through.

"Make Goddamn sure you check in with the prefect of police in the morning," the guard told him, and Fabio gave no sign of even having heard. Every foot of the city seemed to be filled with trucks and armored vehicles, pressed up alongside the walls of the houses for protection, some of them with men in them, sleeping under camouflage nets. A few of them said things to Fabio in German, but he didn't really hear them. He went to the *pensione* where he had shared a room with two other students, and he found that Germans were in it.

"What the hell do you think you're doing here?" the woman who ran the house shouted at him. "Don't you know about the curfew? Don't you know what's going on? You better get off the streets and out of here and stay out."

He didn't know where he was going. He decided to try to reach the house of Galbiati, an instructor he had been fond of and who had been fond of him. He went down the Corso directly into the Piazza Frossimbone. Soldiers sitting in the darkness of doorways said things to him, but he walked on at his own pace. It is hard to frighten anyone who has no more use for life. At one side of the piazza a large sign had been put up and it was lit by a light that was shielded from the sky. A group of German officers and noncoms were gathered about the sign discussing what it said and taking notes and Fabio walked across to it.

The sign was a large, carefully drawn map of the Montefalcone region and on it, broken down into ten areas and twenty subareas, were the names of all the towns and villages that would be occupied within the next several days. The information included the names of the occupying units, the day they would take the town and the hour in which they would arrive. Fabio, even in the condition he was in could appreciate the thoroughness of the work.

San Pietro would be occupied tomorrow morning. Garafano Maggiori tomorrow afternoon, San Rocco del Lago the next evening. Santa Vittoria and Scarafaggio were listed as being in Area R, Subareas 5 and 6. The Germans would come on Wednesday, at 1700 hours.

Three days. Not quite three days. At five o'clock in the afternoon.

He knew at once, the same way he had known when he had seen Bombolini on top of the water tower, that he would have to go to Santa Vittoria and be the one to warn them. Now that he cared he found his heart was beginning to beat hard. He was excited, but his mind was clear and he knew exactly what he wanted to do. He got the rest of the way across the piazza without being seen and up into a dark narrow lane, and from this lane off into a series of lanes that kept him away from the Corso and the piazza but moving deeper into the city where the workingmen lived. He found the house he was looking for, and when his knock was not answered he tapped on the window, and when that went unanswered he was about to go away, when the shutter was opened by a young woman.

"Oh," he said. "I wanted Gambo. I was expecting Gambo."

"He isn't here."

"Is his bike here? He said I could use it whenever I needed it." She said nothing, but tried to make him out in the darkness. "I need it."

"Stand over here. Let me see you." She made him come near to the window and she held his head up. "Wait here," she said, and in a moment he could hear the chain coming down from the door. "Here is the bike here."

When he got the bicycle out into the steep narrow street he was filled with elation.

When he reached Santa Vittoria some of the older men were still in the Piazza of the People, seated around the fountain.

"Fabio. Oh, Fabio," Bombolini said when he saw him. "I knew you would come back to me." The mayor embraced him. "You're sweating like a pig, Fabio."

"I pedaled all of the way up the mountain. I have bad news. The Germans are coming."

Once again Fabio experienced the blankness of the faces that he had seen the other time.

"I have seen the orders. Elements of the German army will arrive

in Santa Vittoria at five o'clock in the afternoon on this coming Wednesday."

It meant nothing to them, even Bombolini. He threw his bicycle down onto the stones of the piazza.

"We know it's important, Fabio. We appreciate your coming and telling us. It's just that we have expected it all along and there's nothing much to be done about it."

"You could put your women away some place."

"If they touch the women they'll pay for it and they know it."

"You could get that Abruzzi out of town before he gets us all shot."

"No, he's going to stay. He'll be dressed like one of us. No one will be able to tell."

"Do you think all these people can keep a secret like that?"

"We can be a very loud people," Bombolini said, "but when it is to our advantage to keep a secret we can keep one. Keeping a secret is a form of lying you understand."

They were almost all the way across the piazza by then, and at the edge of the Corso Cavour, where it drops down from the Piazza of the People into Old Town, Bombolini took hold of Fabio's arm.

"Don't go away again, Fabio," he said. "We need you here."

"Oh, I don't know. I'm thinking of going into the mountains." He hadn't thought of it before. "The Resistance, you know."

I shall go to the hills, Fabio told himself, and I shall stay in those hills even until I am the last one left, but I shall be unbowed.

"When the Germans come, the policy here is going to be one of accommodation, do you understand?" Bombolini said. Fabio made a face, but Bombolini didn't see it and didn't hear the sound of disapproval, because men generally seem to hear and see the things they wish to hear and see.

"When they push, we will give. We'll be like quicksand."

And I intend to be a rock, Fabio said, but to himself.

"We don't intend to be heroes here. We don't want or need any heroes. We intend to do something a little better. We intend to survive. Thank you, Fabio, and now you get some rest."

"Oh, God, what a people we are," Fabio said.

Bombolini went back up the Corso Cavour, because he knew he could sleep, and went inside the Palace of the People and to his room. Before going to sleep, however, he stopped at Roberto's doorway.

"Do you think the Germans will come here?" he said.

Roberto was annoyed. It was three o'clock in the morning.

"I don't know. I don't know about those things. I was in the air forces."

"There's nothing for them here."

Roberto nodded. "Only your wine," he said, and he was sorry to be disrespectful, but he closed his eyes and fell back to sleep.

When he woke again the sun still had not risen and so he knew he could not have slept for more than an hour at the most. Something had been troubling him and he found a candle and a flint to light it with and began going through *the* book.

"Men are apt to deceive themselves in great things while being scrupulous about the small ones."

He felt a cold hand rest on his heart and begin to squeeze it. He put the book over his heart as if that might stop it. He knew what the words meant.

He got up then and walked by Roberto's room and was going to wake him but decided against it, even though it was Roberto who had seen the truth.

Man sees what he sees and hears what he hears, he thought, and the few who don't are generally considered to be mad. He went downstairs and out into the Piazza of the People where one of the madmen was already in the piazza, on his knees by the fountain-screaming at him, Bombolini. "You son of a bitch," he was screaming. "Do something. Do it now." It was Old Vines.

Bombolini trotted across the rough stones. "Get up now," he said. "I know. There's no sense in terrifying the people before we have a plan."

Others had heard, however, the ones who get up in darkness before the sun even, and they were coming across the piazza.

"Tell them the truth," Old Vines shouted. "Don't lie to us." He got up from his feet then, his face as red as any wine he had ever aged, and turned to them. "The Germans are coming," he shouted, "and they're going to take our wine."

Traub was one who rose with the sun. It was a habit that had begun on the family farm and continued with him into the army. He believed it was a sin to be down when the sun was up. "The early sun is gold in the mouth," his mother said to him. "Yes, the bed is

a thief," his father would say.

He was worried. In two days' time they would be going up a mountain into an unknown city with one officer and two non-coms and six privates, all of them limited-duty soldiers because of previous wounds. He waited for an hour and finally knocked on Captain von Prum's door.

"I want to put a reconnaissance up in Santa Vittoria this afternoon, sir," Traub called through the door. He could hear that the captain was up but he wasn't asked into the room because in the German army it wasn't considered good for morale and discipline for soldiers to see their officers in their underwear.

"No," Captain von Prum said.

"I want to make the strongest possible first impression on these people. If we arrive there with nine men it will impress them. These people lay great store on first impressions."

"But, sir, if there's a road block . . ."

Von Prum opened the door of the room and looked at his sergeant.

"The German army has not yet become a debating society," von Prum said.

Von Prum smiled, because the words had the same effect on the sergeant that they had had on himself the night before when Colonel Scheer shouted them at him. The colonel had had second thoughts about the wisdom of the bloodless victory.

The bastard is making me pay in blood for my bloodless victory, von Prum put in his log, but when the colonel summoned him he had gone at a run.

"No, it all stinks of an experiment," the colonel had said. "It's all right to experiment with Poles. It's all right to try things with Jews. It's not all right with the grandson of Schmidt von Knoblesdorf. If anything happens to Captain von Prum, Willy Scheer will be the one to hang for it."

Scheer was a rare case, the peasant who had risen through the ranks to a position of power without discarding his peasant ways. His manner was rough and direct, his speech was filled with folk sayings, most of them coarse, and he looked as if he had been carved from a potato. It amused him and it flattered him to have aristocrats around him and beneath him.

"No, I can't let you go," Scheer said. "The cream of our culture,

the flower of our people." He was being sarcastic but good natured. "If your name was Schwartz you could go. But a blood relation of Alfons Mumm von Schwarzenstein? Oh, no. It's not your ass I worry about, it's Willy Scheer's ass."

The captain had stared at him. Von Prum knew it was the correct *thing to do then. For reasons he didn't understand, Scheer enjoyed* being stared at in a cold haughty manner.

"You look at me as if I was manure in the field," he said. "Like I was shit." But he smiled. "You heard what happened at Castelgrande," the colonel said. "They went in with fifty men."

"And Moltke," von Prum said. Captain Moltke was famous for *his short temper. When he had encountered a small road block,* Moltke had ordered his men to fire on the people of the town and they had no choice but to fire back.

"Well take a tank at least," Scheer said. The captain shook his head and continued to stare at the colonel.

"What are you going armed with?" he finally asked.

"The culture of the German people," von Prum said. "Our national sense of purpose. Our genius at working with disciplined order."

"Oh you are such a *good* boy," Scheer said. "My God, what a fine noble boy." He was shaking his head by then. "Do you really believe this?"

"*I really believe it,*" *von Prum said.* "*It isn't the idealist's way.* It isn't the dreamer's way. It's the only sensible, practical way to do it. You'll see."

These were the words that angered the colonel and this was when he told the captain that the army had not yet become a debating society. What the captain said went against all the rules Scheer had had to learn so painfully in his life.

"You listen to me," Scheer said. "We don't learn much in the turnip fields but we learn some things that are never forgotten, and one of them is that the one thing that gets respect, the only thing that gets respect, is strength. The weak respect the strong for one reason. Because they're not weak like themselves." The colonel thumped his hard brown stubby hand down onto the hard wooden table. "Here's one of those quaint peasant sayings, Captain von Prum. 'One must be either the anvil or the hammer.' You think about it, There is no other way."

But in the end von Prum had won, as he knew he would win, because in the end he was what the race aspired to, and he knew this and knew that Scheer knew it and approved of it. His Nordic bleaching, as the colonel called it, the blondness and whiteness and the cold blueness of him, was not just the symbol of racial purity but the fact of it. Most Germans, like most of the people of the world, are dark and short, but unlike other people the Germans despise their darkness and their shortness and they don't believe in it. It is von Prum they put on all their posters, and when they have a baby it is von Prum they hope to produce.

"You push me too Goddamn hard," Scheer said, "but then again the German army has not yet become a place where officers go back on their words." They smiled at one another then. "Take a tank," Scheer said. Von Prum shook his head.

"My God, you're stubborn," Scheer said. His voice became hard again.

"This experiment has only one solution, and that is that it must work."

"I understand."

"If it dosen't, I come up there and do things in my way," Scheer said. Von Prum nodded his head.

"Because I'm committed for that wine."

"You will get your wine."

The colonel began to walk toward the door of his office and by this the captain knew the interview was over.

"I want the wine, I want it soon, and I want all of it." He stopped at the door. "When you are ready you let us know, make it soon, and we will come and get the wine."

"But that's all part of it," von Prum said. "When the time comes I intend to have the people bring it out themselves."

"You expect the people to collaborate in their own robbery," he said. His voice was bitter.

"Yes," von Prum said, so quietly and with such little doubt that his arrogance finally caused the colonel to laugh aloud.

"You know one thing that isn't right for a Schmidt von Knoblesdorf?" He ran his stubby fingers down the front of the captain's tunic. "You're a virgin here. No decorations."

It had bothered von Prum's father. Once he had even offered to lend the captain several of his before they went to church.

"I will tell you what I will do," Colonel Scheer said. "If you can get the people of this place . . . what's the name?"

"Santa Vittoria."

"If you get these people to bring their own wine to the railroad here I will recommend you for the Iron Cross."

Considering the state of things in Santa Vittoria they were good to Bombolini; they allowed him to sleep until eleven o'clock, and then they told Roberto to go and wake him. When he looked in the door he was surprised to see how peacefully the mayor was sleeping.

"They're waiting for you down there," Roberto told him.

"Yes, I know that. I can sense them."

"The whole piazza is filled with people."

"They don't know what to do. They don't have their leader."

The people were waiting for them in the piazza.

"We're thinking. Don't worry. We're coming up with something."

As if it were a command, they began to go across the Piazza of the People and down the Corso Cavour to the Cooperative Wine Cellar. In the absence of anything to do they were making a pilgrimage and performing an act of faith in the wine, the way people in other places might go into a church and pray for guidance.

They filed in through the narrow door, into the cool dimness and smelt the incense of the cellar, that sweet sharp smell of the herbs that go into the vermouth, and went down through the tiers of wine which look like tall pews in an attitude of reverence.

It is a true sea of wine in that cellar, a rich dark-red sea held in bottles. To the south of here there are towns where people make the sign of the cross over each crust of bread before they eat it, and we are the same way with the wine. To say something loud or vulgar, to utter an obscenity in the presence of the wine, would be the same as urinating in a cathedral. The sight of so much wine, all that wine to be stolen, was too great for Bombolini to bear, and he went out of a little-used side door and back up a narrow back lane until he reached the piazza and the Palace of the People and found Roberto.

"What are you doing?"

"Arithmetic. My arithmetic. I'm figuring out the hours until they come."

Bombolini didn't want to know. He preferred it that way. Without any plan it was better to just let them come when they came,

unprepared for and unannounced.

"All right," he said finally. "How many?"

"They'll be here in fifty-three hours."

When he heard the hour now it began to flash in his mind in large block letters, as bright and clear as the lights on the theater in Montefalcone, flashing on and off—53 . . . 53 . . . 53 . . . 53—and it was minutes before the glow of the lights would leave his brain.

"Quick, now. As fast as you can say the words. If you were me what would you do with the wine?"

"Hide."

"What?"

"Hide it."

"You would hide it?"

"Yes, hide it," Roberto said.

"Oh, Roberto. So simple and clean and beautiful that it's almost stupid," the mayor said, and he struck Roberto such a blow on the arm that it was weeks before the American could raise it without feeling pain.

The effort to hide the wine was a failure. Within the first half hour of the experiment, before twenty thousand bottles had been taken from the Cooperative Wine Cellar and brought up into the Piazza of the People it was clear to anyone who wished to see it that the experiment was no longer worth going on with. But people sometimes are more willing to go on with the work than face up to the failure.

They piled the bottles in the piazza and then the different families, began to hide them in their houses. They put them in closets and under beds and behind pictures and in the backs of fireplaces and then in the drains and on the roofs and under loose tiles and then in the manure piles and on grapevine hung down the chimneys.

"Keep the wine in the shadows, the sun is bruising it," Old Vines shouted at the people. "Would you put a newborn baby in the sun? This wine isn't even born yet. Don't shake the wine. Would you shake a newborn baby? This wine isn't born yet."

Sometime in the early afternoon Bombolini summoned the courage to ask the keeper of the wine how many bottles remained to be hidden, and when Old Vines told him, it was a matter of several minutes before he could make himself hear the figures, and when he did he wrote them on a card—*"1,320,000."*

Each time he looked at the number he found it hard to comprehend. He held the card up first on one side and then on the other, as if somehow, if he twisted it in enough ways, the value of the numbers might change. Even if they hid 100,000 bottles, which was impossible, it was only one-thirteenth of the wine and by enormous effort they would have achieved nothing. At four o'clock there was to be an inspection of the hiding, and the teams went out even though all of the people knew what they would report. A few minutes later the first of them came back.

"It's no good, Captain. It isn't working right," Longo's son said. "You can see bottles everywhere. Everytime you turn around in the Pietrosanto house you sit on a bottle, you step on a bottle, you break a bottle. The beds are lumpy with bottles."

It was the same everywhere.

"Bring the bottles back out," Bombolini ordered, and he felt at that moment the dread of failure. To the credit of the people he passed, none of them said anything to him. He went back across the piazza, passing the bottles piled on the cobblestones and piled in carts, seeing and not seeing at the same time the people going into the houses and starting to bring the wine back out. He had the weight of the city and of one thousand people and now one million bottles of wine to carry. It was too much for any one man, he thought. He felt someone pulling on him and he turned to look. It was Fungo, the idiot.

It is said that when a man is drowning, just as he goes down, he will grab at a twig in the water and for that moment really believe that it will hold him; and so, at this moment, Bombolini stopped to listen to Fungo.

"I have something to tell you," Fungo said.

"Tell. Tell me."

Out of the mouths of babes and idiots and drunks—Who could tell until he listened?

"Tufa's back," the boy said.

"Oh, Christ above!"

"You have a filthy mouth," the boy said

"Excuse me. How do you know?"

The boy told him how he had gone to Tufa's house to see if he could find any bottles and he had found Tufa there, in the dark, lying on the floor.

"He's dying," Fungo said.

"How would you know that?"

"Someone told me."

"Who?"

"Tufa. And he should know."

I will attend to Tufa, he thought. It was at least something positive to do. I will make every effort to save Tufa's life. He thought for a moment that he was crying, and then he looked up and was surprised to see that it was raining.

The people were running past him, getting out of the piazza before the full force of the rain reached them. The people here love the rain and they love to see it rain. It is not going too far to say they adore the rain in Italy, but as soon as they see a drop they run from it.

Old Vines caught up to Bombolini. "Stop them," he shouted. "You have to order them to stay. We can't leave the wine out here. The rain will wash the dust from the bottles. The rain will chill the wine."

Bombolini looked at the old man as if he came from some other town. "Who cares?" he said. "Do we have to have the wine at room temperature for the Germans when they come?"

"Wine is wine no matter who has it," the old man shouted. "To abuse wine is to abuse life itself." Now he was shaking Bombolini by the shoulders and shouting something about killing him.

"Then fuck the wine," Bombolini said. Old Vines fell away from him.

"Oh, you sin," he said. Neither of them felt the rain that was falling hard by then. "You sin against the wine."

I fully expect the next bolt of lightning to strike me in the heart, Bombolini thought.

He pushed the cellar master to one side and started down the Corso Cavour to Old Town and Tufa's mother's house. He had made up his mind to keep all of his thoughts on Tufa.

There were strange things about Tufa. He was, for one, an officer in the army, and that should have separated him from the people here, but it didn't. Even worse, he was a Fascist, but this had never stopped him from being a hero to the young people here and a person to whom the old were not afraid to turn for help when he was home.

The thing about Tufa was that he was a true Fascist, a real Fascist, who believed all the glorious words and tried to follow them, and that had made him a very strange person here and in all of Italy. As a young boy he had been chosen from all the rest in Santa Vittoria to go away and be trained as a Young Fascist Scout. He had believed every word he heard at the camp. Later he became a soldier and after that was made an officer in the Sforzesca, one of the aristocratic regiments, a very rare thing to happen.

When he came home on leave people would go to him and ask him to intercede for them with The Band or with the Fascists in Montefalcone.

"What is this I hear you are doing to Baldisseri?" he would ask them. "Only Communists would do a thing like that."

It must have been a mistake, they always told him, and it would certainly not happen again.

"Well of course not," he would say. "*We* don't do things like that."

"No, we don't," they would say. They were afraid of the innocence in his eyes and the anger that could replace it. He was a believer in a nation of nonbelievers, people who believe that to believe in anything is dangerous and even evil itself, since believing limits one and to be limited is to court disaster. None of the Fascists in the region could wait for Tufa's leaves to be over, and they breathed easier when he was gone and hoped to God that he would meet a glorious end in Albania or Greece or Africa.

The room was dark and it felt wet and it was dirty. It smelled bad. Tufa's mother had never been able to run a house.

"Where is he?" Bombolini asked. The soldier's mother pointed to one end of the room, where the mayor could eventually make out Tufa's shape lying on the floor facing the stone wall.

"He's going to die," the mother said. "I can see it in his eyes. All the life is gone."

Bombolini crossed the room and stood over Tufa's body, not knowing what to say to him. Tufa had never liked him because he had been a clown and Tufa didn't understand clowns. With a terrible slowness Tufa turned away from the wall and looked at Bombolini.

"Get out of here," he said. "I have always despised you."

The mother was wrong about the eyes. There was the recognition

of death in them, but there was also hatred, which had not been seen there before, and beneath both of these a kind of terrible hurt.

"You had better get out," the mother said. "He means what he says. He always means what he says."

"Tufa? Can you hear me?"

"Get out of here."

"I'm not a clown any more, Tufa. I'm the mayor here now. Can you hear me? Can you understand that?"

"Get out of here."

The hatred was so strong that it defeated Bombolini. He backed out of the house and stood in the Corso Cavour and allowed the rain to fall on him until his hair was streaming with water.

That evening Bombolini asked Roberto to go and ask the Malatesta to take a look at Tufa. "She'll listen to you," Bombolini said. 'You're not from here, and she thinks you're brave."

"She doesn't think I'm brave," Roberto said. "She thinks I'm afraid of pain."

"Ah, but that's just it. *Because* you're afraid of pain, the way you acted to it makes you a brave man," he said. "Besides, I think she has an eye for you. She thinks you're handsome."

"How do you know?"

"I heard her say so once."

It was a lie, a complete and shameless lie, which Roberto recognized as a lie and treated as one, and yet it made his heart beat faster. Despite himself, the heart beat faster.

He dressed and went into the rain and crossed the Piazza of the People. It was the first time he had seen all the bottles in the piazza. At the wineshop he decided to stop and get some cheese before making the hard climb up to High Town and when he thought of facing the Malatesta he ordered a full bottle of wine as well.

"What's all the wine doing in the piazza?" he asked Rosa Bombolini.

"Do you think I know? Do you think I care? Do you think I give a shit what idiot tricks that boob is up to?"

He determined never to ask her a question again. When he came out it was dark and he felt a little drunk from the wine, but it made the ache in his bone feel better. At the street that runs up into High Town someone whispered his name. It was Fabio.

"I thought you were up in the mountains." Roberto said.

"I am in the mountains. Five of us. The Petrarch Brigade, formally. The Red Flames, informally." He named four young boys who were with him, none of whom was over fifteen years of age. "They're young, but they can fight," Fabio said. "They also are hungry."

With some of his own money and some of Fabio's, Roberto went back to the wineshop and bought two loaves of bread for the Red Flames.

"Now you do a favor for me," Roberto said. He made Fabio go with him to face Caterina Malatesta. They walked up the hill in silence for a long way.

"How is she?" Fabio said at last.

"Who?"

"Angela," Fabio said.

"I don't know. I haven't seen her. That's why I was buying cheese. She doesn't bring us our meals."

"I suppose you two have a lot of fun together when he isn't around."

"Angela and me?"

"Yes, Angela and you. A lot of fun together, if you know what I mean."

"Oh no, nothing like that. Angela isn't like that."

Fabio made a sound like a mule. "They're *all* like that," he said. "Don't tell me. I know them from top to bottom. Put a grape basket over their heads and turn them upside down and—"

"Oh, do they say that here, too? We say 'Put a sack over their heads.'"

Caterina lived in the next to the last house on the mountain. It was a long way.

Neither one of them wanted to knock on the door, but it was Fabio who finally did it, and when she came to the door and opened it they were surprised to see her. She was wearing long slender pants and little slippers and a sweater that revealed the outline of her breasts. None of these things are worn by the women here, even today. She had pulled her hair back and tied it with a scarf the way the peasant women do, and yet it looked nothing like a peasant's. She didn't wish to come and she resisted, but Fabio was persuasive and there is something about Tufa, even to those who had barely known him, that was special. She got a raincoat that

looked like the kind of coat army officers wear, and she went with them down the dark winding back lane into Old Town.

She didn't knock at the door of the house, but opened it and went in and put down the medical bag Roberto had carried for her. She took a lamp from the bag and when it was lit she could see Tufa, not lying down any longer but propped up against the wall looking at her the way a wolf looks at someone coming for him from the back of a cave. In the light his teeth were as bright as his eyes, and he looked very sane and very mad at the same moment, like someone who could kill or become a martyr with equal ease.

He frightened Roberto. He had never before seen a man who seemed to burn. Caterina had known him from when she was a girl, but when she saw him she made a sound, a stifled sound of astonishment. She was not able to take her eyes away from him.

"You are hurt," she said.

"You aren't going to touch me." Tufa has the finest voice in the city, sweet and yet strong. Sometimes it sounds as if Tufa was whispering through the pipe of an organ.

"You're badly hurt. I can help you. You'd like to die, but your body won't allow you to."

He said nothing.

"It's the fate of your kind," she said. "My kind die easily."

All of this while Caterina kept moving toward him. Somewhere in this book it tells of thunderbolt love, but this was something different. There was an awareness of each other that was so acute and powerful and immediate that it went beyond anything we know as love. It is an understanding of each other so immediate and so total that there is nothing they don't know about one another and they are able to share things with each other at once, even in front of others, that they have never been able to share with anyone before. They have *always* known each other, at once. Some people feel that this is proof that people must have lived before, people such as this are playing out again a love affair from some other age. Except for one thing: There is no love; it goes beyond love. They exist totally for one another, and nothing else exists. The attraction supplants all else, and yet there is no love, not even any tenderness, only the attraction and the understanding of one another. They are like vacuums, and when they meet the crack is formed and they rush into each other, each into the other, the souls are sharing one another, the way

the wind rushes into the wine cellar when the door is swung ajar.

When she touched him he stiffened. She didn't move her hand for a moment, but then she began to take off the officer's jacket he wore to examine the wounds in his chest and upper arms that he had received the week before from an exploding grenade.

"They told me you were a good man," she said. Roberto brought her the medical bag. "How can you be a Fascist and a good man at the same time?"

For a long time Tufa said nothing, but it didn't seem to bother her. She was willing to wait. She dressed several of the wounds.

"You can be," he said at last, "if you are a fool."

Caterina finished dressing the last of the wounds. Most of them were not deep, but several of them were infected and the flesh was ragged around them.

"You're not going to get better here," the Malatesta said. "You're going to have to get out of this room."

"Where are you going to take him?" Tufa's mother asked. "He can't go to the hospital."

"Some place where he can get better."

The mother got up from the box she sat on and began collecting her son's things.

"I don't want him dying in here," she said. "Besides, you know what I have to feed him?" She tapped the side of an earthen pot. "I have ten or twelve olives. I can't count. I have one piece of bread and no oil to drip on it."

Caterina looked at Tufa. "Do you want to go with me?"

"Oh, yes. You know that," he said, and he began to get to his feet. When she helped him she was surprised to find that he was silently crying.

"The first time," he said. "The first time ever."

He didn't know why he cried, but he wasn't ashamed of the tears. Later he was able to figure that he cried because he was giving up the death he had planned for himself and he knew that he was going to have to enter again into the life that had fooled him so terribly and that he had wanted to give up. He went past his mother and out into the Corso Cavour, where Fabio and Roberto were waiting in the rain.

"You don't say goodbye to your mother?"

"No, we don't do that in this family," Tufa said. Tufa, although he was weak and sick, led the way up the Corso, which is the way

it is in this town. He was forced to lean against the walls and gasp for breath, but he led the way up.

They went up the long hill and it was midnight when they reached the door to the Malatesta house and Tufa stopped to regain his breath before going inside it.

"I never thought I would go inside here again," Tufa said. "I never thought I would go inside of my own choice."

He hesitated at the door.

"I never ate chicken again. I have never had a piece of chicken in my mouth from that day," he said, but then he went through the door.

It was cold inside and dark and when Caterina managed to light the little lamp that was fed by ox fat she found that Tufa was trembling from cold and wet and from exhaustion. The lamp light made the room seem warmer, but he could not control his shaking.

"Take off your clothes and get into that bed," Caterina said. "My bed."

"I'm not used to taking orders," he said. He made no move of any kind.

"Do you want me to turn away?"

"Of course." He sounded annoyed. "Of course."

She waited until she heard him get into the bed before turning around. Next to the bed was a small porcelain stove that had been brought to Santa Vittoria by some Malatesta from some foreign place when there was money. There was no fuel for the fire, but she burned the stump of a broom and it gave good light, and for a while it heated the room. She found a bottle of anisette and the liquor warmed them both, but there was not enough of it to sustain them and he wanted to talk to her.

"I'll borrow a bottle," she said. When she returned he was asleep, but he awoke at once when she came back through the door. She had a bottle of good vermouth and she uncorked it and handed it to him.

"The bottle is all wet," Tufa said. "Oh, you went back down?" He shook his head. "They would have hung you from the fountain by your heels if they had caught you."

The story Tufa had to tell is not an uncommon one in Italy, although it is possible that Tufa would tell it with greater hurt than most of the others, since Tufa has more pride than most. The story is the same, over and over, only the facts are different and the names and the places.

He had wanted to be a good soldier and a good Italian. He had wanted to act with courage, he had wanted to keep his integrity and live with honor. It wasn't a great deal to ask of a state, to be able to serve it and to live and even die for it like a man. But they wouldn't allow that, although Tufa wasn't prepared to admit it. He lied to himself about the failures in Albania and the disasters in Greece. He continued to encourage his men to die for a cause they couldn't believe in, but which he could not make himself admit was not worth dying for. Through his example, young men, for him alone as a man, stood and fought and were maimed or killed for it. And then one night, in North Africa, near Bengasi, some of the men, his own men, shot him in the back.

"I'm sorry," the one who did the shooting said. "We have to do this to save ourselves."

Even then he wasn't willing to admit everything to himself. When he rejoined his regiment in Sicily the soldiers were frightened by the officer who was so brave that he would kill them to prove it. During the first attack his men deserted.

"*We* stay," Tufa had shouted at them. "The others run We stay. We stand like men, we go down like men."

But they ran. They ran at him and past him, and he lifted his rifle as he had been forced to do before, and they kept running, and for the first time he lowered the rifle and knew that they were right and he was wrong and that to shoot them would be to murder them. That night he himself ran, across Sicily in the night, to the Straits of Messina, where he used the rifle to force a fisherman to take him to the mainland, and he had run in the night like some wounded animal trying to make his way back to his den to lick his wounds in secrecy and darkness or to die.

When he was through the fire had gone out and the house was cold again and it was Caterina who was shivering.

"I'm going to have to come to bed. I hope you will allow this," Caterina said. It was a matter of courtesy only.

"There is no choice, is there?"

She took off her clothes and came to the bed, and neither of them said anything after that. Tufa had begun trembling once more, from the cold and his tiredness and from the story he had told. The heat of her body warmed him and calmed him and the trembling lessened, and after a time he slept. It wasn't sleep but a gaining of rest, because

when he really slept he would not be easy to wake again. After a short time he awoke and they made love to each other. There was no surprise about it and no surprise about each other, they were exactly what they had expected of each other.

Bombolini said. "But, Roberto, tell me this one thing. What am I going to do?"

"Something will turn up. You watch."

"Americans always say that," Bombolini said.

"Will you listen to a story from me?" When Bombolini nodded Roberto told him a story he had learned from a soldier who had come from Arkansas.

One day, Roberto said, a man was hunting for bear and he came to the middle of a great open field and he found that his gun wouldn't work. There was no tree to climb, no rock to run behind, no cave to crawl into and all at once an enraged bear came out of some distant woods across the open field directly at the hunter. It was a very close call, Roberto said.

"What do you mean, a close call. What did the hunter do?"

"He climbed a tree."

"But I thought you said there was no tree."

"That's just the point. There *had* to be, there *had* to be."

Bombolini had listened with respectful silence, and when the story was over he shook his head and made a face.

"Where?" he said.

"Down below the terraces," Roberto said. "At the foot of the mountain. The place with the two wine cellars."

"The two wine cellars," the mayor said.

"Put the wine in one of them and brick it over."

"Put bricks over the opening." His voice remained as thin as before, but it was a little higher.

"Yes. So it looks just like the wall. Seal it off," Roberto said. "Instead of an opening you'll have a false wall."

Bombolini said nothing for a long time—so long that Roberto grew impatient with him.

"It's all brick back there. You must remember it."

Bombolini nodded but the truth was that he had not been in the cave or seen the wine cellars in many years.

"That second cellar doesn't even look as if it belongs in there. The one at the far end. It looks like an afterthought, you know."

"Yes," Bombolini said.

"As if they built the first cellar and found they didn't have enough room and had to add a second one."

"Yes."

"So if you bricked it over it would all look like part of the wall."

"Yes." He looked numb now, although his heart was racing and he was conscious of blood rushing through him, as numb as the old oxen, the eyes large and staring, the body stunned but not moving, waiting for the next blow of the sledge hammer.

"They'll find it out," the mayor said.

"I suppose so."

"They'll see through it at once."

"It's a chance, that's all."

"They aren't stupid people."

"I suppose there are stupid Germans and smart Germans, just like here," Roberto said.

"They want the wine," Bombolini said. "They'll do anything to get it."

"You want it too," Roberto said. "I thought you wanted to try anything to save it."

Bombolini had been looking at the wall, afraid that if he looked at Roberto his line of reasoning might break down. Now he turned and moved toward him.

"I'm sorry," Roberto was saying. "I thought it was worth the try."

"Worth the try, Roberto? Worth it?"

He moved so swiftly toward Roberto that he struck a chair and knocked it over and didn't seem to notice it.

"Christ, Roberto," Bombolini said. "Christ above, Roberto."

"We'll build such a wall that God Himself won't be able to see it," he said aloud.

He ran. When he reached the piazza he kept running until he got to the campanile, and when the bell tower door wouldn't open he pulled on it with such fury that the old iron handle came off in his hands and he was able to work the latch. He felt for the bell cord in the darkness and when he felt the greasy hemp he began to pull on it as hard and as swiftly as he was able.

The people there heard it and they lit the olive-oil lamps and the tallow lights and they began to get out of bed, although it was an hour or two before it was time to get up. It was black in the piazza then.

Bombolini had no watch. "The time?" he shouted at the first people to come into the piazza. "What is the time? Tell me the time." At last someone came who owned a watch and they crowded around him and he held it up to catch the light of the moon. It was two o'clock in the morning. They watched Bombolini while he counted. He used his fingers for the hours and his fist stood for an entire day. He did it over several times because he wanted to be certain.

"Thirty-nine hours," he told them. "The Germans will be here in thirty-nine hours."

CHAPTER IV

THE WINE

BEFORE the sun got into Santa Vittoria that morning, while all the cocks in the city were crowing as if they were inventing the morning, it was no longer possible to cross the Piazza of the People in a straight line.

Every person in Santa Vittoria who was able to walk, every man, and every woman and every child was in the piazza. Every cart in Santa Vittoria was in the piazza. Everything that could be pulled or pushed or had wheels was in the piazza. Every animal that could carry a bottle of wine was in the piazza. Every donkey and every mule and every ox in Santa Vittoria was in the piazza.

When Bombolini and the members of the Grand Council came out of the People's Palace into the piazza they were forced to nudge the people to get by them and finally to push them out of the way to reach the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle and start their inspection tour down the Corso Cavour.

Everyone wanted to say something to Bombolini, to touch him, to hit him on the back. A woman took him by the arm. "I want to tell you this, Italo. You are a great man," she shouted at him, and she kissed him full on the lips while her husband stood there and smiled and approved.

That is the way it was in the Piazza of the People, all of the way across it. The mayor didn't want to smile, he wanted to impress on the people the importance of the day and the work that lay ahead of them, but when they shouted at him and blessed him the smile would come and he could not get it to go away from his face. They stepped around the big wicker grape baskets the people had carried into the piazza and past the women with the large-throated water jugs that would receive bottles and over the buckets and tubs and laundry baskets that were spread over the cobblestones. Up on the fountain itself, Pietro Pietrosanto, as head of the army directing traffic in the piazza, was shouting orders.

"Get all of the people with the shoulder yokes and bring them to the fountain," he was shouting.

"Shoulder yokes, shoulder yokes," the men shouted, and in every corner a push and a shove began as the people with the yokes

began their fight to get to the fountain.

"Will you ever get it organized?" Bombolini shouted to Pietro.

"I got it organized," Pietro said. "I know what I'm doing up here."

It was hard to see it, the way it is hard for an outsider who sees the harvest here to realize that out of all this chaos was actually a kind of secret and complex order that only those involved in picking the grapes can understand and that in all the pushing and shouting and shoving there was a shape and a form. Already, for example, all the young men and the strong men had been lined in a file, so that when the time came to pick up the bottles and begin carrying them down the mountain to the Roman cellars they would be the first to go because they could do the most.

"When you're ready for me down there," Pietrosanto shouted, "I'll be ready up here."

By the time Bombolini and the men reached the Corso and started down it the young men were clapping their hands in time and shouting "Let's go, let's go, let's go, let's go . . ." and the sound followed them down through the street as if a mob were bellowing through a pipe at them. At the Fat Gate they stopped.

"Now where the hell is Polenta?" Bombolini said. "It's no good without the priest."

They waited for him and before they left they saw him coming down from a side lane into the Corso, his silver cross bobbing up and down over the heads of the people around him as he came, running.

"I'm sorry. They all want to be blessed on this day," Padre Polenta said.

"There's no time for blessing," Bombolini said.

"There is always time for God's blessing." When Bombolini saw all the men begin to nod he dropped the matter. The shouting from the piazza drove them on.

"We could move the whole city today," Vittorini said.

"We could move the whole mountain," one of them said.

When they trotted around the sharp corner in the Corso just past Babbaluche's house and shop, Bombolini for one brief moment felt a sensation of chill, the way it happens on an autumn day when a cloud passes over the sun and all at once it is cold. Bombolini said it was as if a cold hand slipped over his heart and squeezed it,

very gently and coldly.

But they ran on. There is going to be trouble here, Bombolini said to himself, but he didn't hear himself. They went through the Fat Gate and started down the track that goes through the terraces to the foot of the mountain. They were walking fast, and then they were running down.

"Pietrosanto will be starting now," one of them said. The sun came up then, all at once, and it touched the walls around the city and then the roof tiles, and it glittered off the red-and-blue sign on top of the Cooperative Wine Cellar so that the sign was like a sun itself.

"You're certain you know how to do it, Padre?" Bombolini said. "It won't take long, I hope."

"It's in here, right here," the priest said. He tapped the book he held in his hand along with the cross. "All the rules of God."

After such a rain it should have been cool, but the wind had shifted and was coming from the south. The door to furnace of Africa that we thought had been closed for the year was open again. By afternoon the fresh snow on the high mountains would have melted and the slopes would be running with fresh water and the fountain in the piazza would be spurting ice-cold water. But down here the mud would harden and then cake, and by late afternoon the caking would explode into dust.

"A very fine day for the grapes," one of them said. Heat after rain is said to cause sugar to form and turn fat in the grapes. No one mentioned the other thing, that it would be a bad day for people. The sun already had a hot look to it, flat and hard and white, like a plate hung in the sky, and no cloud anywhere to soften it along the way. After that they went in silence until they reached the opening in the mountain that leads into the Big Room and the two cellars built into the back wall of the room None of them would enter it then until the priest had gone in first.

"Hurry up, Padre, please," Bombolini said. "Run in there and sanctify the place."

Polenta went inside the entrance and several of the braver men went with him, staying behind the cross and the aspergillum and the priest while he flayed and scourged whatever evil spirits were hiding in the darkness of the Big Room.

Bombolini gave the sign by a motion of his arm.

"Start them coming," he shouted.

"Pass them on, pass them on," the people began to shout, and the word flew up the mountain, it shot from mouth to mouth, and it was the start of the rhythm.

The bottles began to flow then, hand to hand, a stream of bottles at first, out of the cellar, down to the gate, through the wall and then down the mountain, a stream at first until they found the rhythm of the flow and then it was a river, a river of wine running down the mountain.

The shouting stopped soon enough, because the day was hot and the work was hard, but the wine kept coming so that three teams of men were finally needed to put down the wine.

It isn't easy to describe how they lay the wine here. It is a simple-looking job, but outsiders never learn to do it well. It is something you grow up knowing how to do, the same as spooning soup into your mouth. No one remembers learning how to use a spoon, it is something that is learned and not taught. It was the same with the wine. The first row of bottles is laid on the ground, and then long strips of wood, just strong enough to support a second row of bottles, are laid on top of the bottom row. The second row is placed in the opposite direction, one row of corks, one row of butts, and this goes on, tier after tier, eighteen and even twenty tiers high. All of the while long thin strips of wood are worked down through the rows of bottles, to the left of the neck of a bottle in one row and to right of the neck of the bottle below, so that the bottles pull and push against each other and in the end provide the very force that holds them all together. It is very simple and very strong, and it can be put up or taken down as fast as men can put down bottles.

The men were mixed with the women and there was something personal in the passing of the bottles, in the rhythm of it, in the swaying of the bodies, in the smell of each other and in the touching of their hands. Fabio, for instance, found himself next to a woman he had hardly ever noticed before, and as they worked he began to appreciate a kind of stubborn beauty about her in the calm, passive set of her face and the smooth solid strength of her arms and sureness of her touch and the way her solid full breasts rose and fell with each passing of the wine. Up above him in the line, he could see Angela working and it didn't bother him. She was a girl and

this was a woman.

Roberto watched the wine going down the mountain. He could see that almost half or perhaps even more than half of the wine was gone by then and he could also see that the people on the line were working by instinct, at the level of the lowest animals, like blind *mules grinding grain at harvest.*

"It's good that you are almost done," Roberto said. "The people can't go on much longer."

"What do you mean, done? There's still half of the wine to go," the mayor said.

"But you wouldn't take it all. You have to leave some of it for them."

"We don't leave a drop for the bastards," a man shouted to Roberto from the line. "Don't give away *our* wine, friend."

Roberto remembered something from his youth and he knew he was right and that he also could tell it to the people in a way that they could understand.

It was the Rabbit Garden *that since has become famous in Santa* Vittoria. When Roberto was a boy his father put in a large vegetable garden in the back of the house, because no Italian could stand the sight of soil going unused. Roberto was ashamed of it, filled with broccoli and other goomba foods. At night the rabbits came from the woods along a parkway and stole from the garden. The first year the garden was a failure, until some people told his father what the Americans did. They made their garden and they fenced it in, and then they made a second garden, smaller, with a low fence around it, for the rabbits. The rabbits came and ate the rabbit garden and they never touched the main garden again.

He went to Bombolini and he told his story, and Bombolini knew at once that it was true, that Santa Vittoria, if the Germans weren't to tear it apart brick by brick and stone by stone, needed a Rabbit Garden of its own. The only question was how large the garden should be.

By the light of the pine torches they held a meeting of the Grand Council.

The council members looked into the wine cellar, and some of them walked around the bottles and tried to count them in their heads, and they came back outside with long faces.

"Ten thousand bottles," one of the older men shouted.

"Ten thousand. It's enough," another said. "Not a drop more. It's all that we can afford."

Everyone knew the number was wrong, but none of them wanted to be the one to give the wine away; it goes against everything in the blood. Pietro Pietrosanto is tougher than the rest and a realist, and it was Pietro who began the bidding again.

"One hundred thousand bottles," Pietro called out.

One older man clapped his hand over his heart as if a knife had been put in it. "Jesus, Mary and Joseph," he said, and he made the sign of the cross.

For a time after that, no one dared to talk, because although there was not much time shocks such as these need time to be absorbed. But it was Babbaluche who let them know it in the manner they could understand.

He began by calling them bottle-grubbing bastards and penny-pinching peasant pigs and he ended by saying things that in Italy it is forbidden to put on paper, even in one's own home, and in the end he named a proper figure: 500,000 bottles.

He was correct and at the same time he was wrong.

No bearer of the blood of the men who cut the terraces an inch at a time out of the stony sides of the mountain, no sons of those whose sweat watered the vines that had first been planted here a thousand years before, was capable of giving away 500,000 bottles of wine, even if it was the only correct thing to do. There is a limit to how far men will go even to save themselves. But the figure had the virtue of making the figure that was finally decided upon seem believable. After more minutes of bidding and debate, during which men wept and threatened to put themselves to death first, it was agreed to plant the Rabit Garden with 300,000 bottles of wine.

The last bottle. They started it down the line with tenderness, they handled it with enormous delicacy. "Don't drop it," they said, "this is the last." People expected it to look different from all the rest, but it was the same, and it was hard to believe that one more would not be coming after it. They passed it along the way women pass around the newborn child or as if they were passing the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ, down the mountain, which in a manner they were, since this was the wine of God and the body and blood of Santa Vittoria.

It was strange when the bottle had gone past. There was no

sense of joy, but only one of emptiness.

"What do we do now?" a woman asked.

"We go home to our beds," a man said to her.

They met him in the Piazza of the People—Bombolini, Pietrosanto, Fabio and Roberto—and started at once down the Corso Cavour.

"It can't be described to you. You have to see it. All at once," Bombolini said.

Down through the Fat Gate, down the track that goes through the terraces. The sun was well up then. Fog still clung to clumps of grape leaves and tried to hold on to the vines, but they were only shreds of fog, the sun had burned the rest away.

"Don't turn back," Bombolini said. "I want you to see it all at once."

On the sandy flat before the entrance to the Big Room the bricks had already been brought down and were stacked on the sand. Some men were taking the first bricks inside, while a second group was beginning to mix the cement and lime and sand and water that would be used to seal the bricks together.

"They might as well stop that now," Bombolini said, but the men didn't hear him.

"It's not going to do any good. It's all a waste now." They didn't hear him. In the morning Bombolini seemed to have grown smaller than he had been in the night. "Go ahead. Look. You might as well see it now."

From the Thin Gate down the goat path, down through the terraces and directly into the mouth of the cellar ran, unbroken, and growing darker and wider as it went, a brilliant purple stain.

And making the purple even more brilliant to the eye, dazzling in truth, was the glitter of the sun on the pieces of glass from a thousand broken bottles.

"If God Himself were making a sign to where the wine was hidden He could not have done a finer piece of work," Bombolini said.

They could not take their eyes away from the stain. Each moment, as the sun rose higher and the mist burned away, the color grew in strength and in depth and the glass shone more brightly to match the sun itself. Old Vines came out of the cellar and looked at the mountain.

"We never should have disturbed the wine," he said. "This is His curse for disturbing the wine."

"There is no sense going on," Bombolini said. "To home and to bed. There is a purple arrow in our heart."

They didn't know what the Captain was talking about. They sat in the dim coolness and looked into the dark mouth of the second cellar where the tiers of wine sat.

"We came a long way," one of them said. "We made a try. We didn't quit without a fight."

Suddenly Vittorini got to his feet. You see Vittorini in the dim light, because he was already wearing his uniform so that he might stand at Bombolini's side in the piazza when the Germans came, a representative of tradition, the kind of man another soldier might respect.

"Everybody to his feet. We have a solution," the old soldier said. "We shall wash the mountain."

They tried to think of ways that it wouldn't work, because they had given up and the effort to save the wine once more was too much then to face.

"There is no water," Guido Pietrosanto said. "We used the last of it last night."

"We'll pump some more," Vittorini said. "Longo? Can you get the pump back up the mountain?"

Longo was asleep against the wall. When his work was done he had drunk a good deal of wine. But when they woke him he said he could get the pump and the generator up the mountain and that the bricklayers would have to go on by torchlight.

"I don't want to be the one to wake the people," Fabio said. "I couldn't bear to look at them."

"They've had two hours' sleep. It's all they need," Pietrosanto said.

There were the carts and oxen which had brought down the bricks. They got in the carts, and on the way back up most of them slept. When the oxen stopped—since some of them were as tired as the men and had less to gain for their work—they kicked them, and when the kicks no longer worked they burned them on the bellies with the pieces of rope that had been dipped in tallow.

It would be good to say that the people responded to the crisis with good humor, but it wasn't true. Most of them were angry at being awakened. "You lied to us," they said.

"Come on, get up," the men would say to them. "Get your water jug, get your chamber pot, get your buckets. We're going to wash the mountain."

They got up, but they were angry. Once again there was a line on the mountain. This time they lined up along the spillway and when the water came they filled the jugs and bottles and walked back across the terraces to the goat path.

At first it was no good. The water didn't thin the wine, the wine here is so heavy and dark, but it spread the wine and made it brighter and the air was thick with the smell of sour wine. There was nothing to do, however, but to go on and finally at ten o'clock in the morning, after perhaps a hundred thousand gallons of water had been poured on the side of the mountain the wine began to thin and the earth began to swallow the wine and the water. Young boys had been coming down the path with grape baskets strapped to their backs and these were filled with glass. The people's spirits kept rising, because in another hour, if the sun stayed out and the wind held, the earth would begin to dry and by noon no one would be able to tell what had taken place there. It had rained the day before, when it shouldn't have rained, and now clouds were swarming up from the south. If they brought rain again it might do good, but if the clouds only served to hide the sun it could prove fatal.

"Send for the priest," Bombolini ordered. Before Padre Polenta was brought down from the bell tower, Capoferro was already in the little piazza before the Fat Gate rolling his sticks on the goatskin drum and shouting at the sun.

"Come on, you bastard up there, burn us," he shouted. "Bake us, fry us, boil us, singe us, dry us up."

Capoferro is one of those here who believe that God lives in the sun, just as there are those who believe He lives in the moon, although they never tell that to Polenta. When they brought the priest down the mayor seized him.

"We need your prayers," Bombolini said. "Say the prayers for sun."

"There are no prayers for sun," the priest said. "People always pray for rain."

"When Noah was in the Ark I suppose the people prayed for rain?" Babbaluche said.

"That was before organized religion," Polenta said.

"Ah, all *they* had was God, the poor bastards," the cobbler said.

In the end, however, they came to a sound religious compromise. The priest agreed to read the prayer for rain and everytime he came to the word he paused and the people said "sun." At times the prayer made little sense, but God must have been able to understand what the people were trying to tell Him, since mysteries are nothing new to Him, and not too long after the prayer was said the clouds slid over Scarafaggio on the other mountain, and our wet earth began to bake again.

After the prayers it was a time for listening again and for waiting for the false wall to grow and for relaying the wine in the Cooperative Wine Cellar.

There are many ways to put down wine, but in general there are two ways, the tight way which we use here and the loose way which is used in wineries that have a great deal of room to spare. In the loose way, the bottles are placed in such a fashion that they don't touch one another. It takes a good deal of room, more room than we have here, but it reduces the chance of bottles breaking when accidents happen, and so it is used when there is room. The winelayers were put to work in the Cooperative cellar and all that morning and afternoon they spread the last of the bottles, so by midafternoon the 300,000 bottles almost filled the great room and were made to look as if they were at least 600,000.

But most of the worry was with the wall.

"How does it grow?" the people asked.

"It grows, it grows," Bombolini would say. But the work went slowly. The light of the flares was bad and it caused smoke, and the men were on the edge of exhaustion. But, as Bombolini said, it grew and it wouldn't stop growing. It was two feet by eleven o'clock, and six feet by noon, and eight feet by the time the people had had their bread and soup and the old people at least and some of the women had fallen asleep. At one o'clock a boy rode up the mountain on a mule and he had good news to tell the town. The wall would be finished no later than two o'clock that afternoon, three good hours before the Germans came.

At fifteen minutes before two o'clock, Italo Bombolini and Pietrosanto and Vittorini and Fabio and Roberto and twenty other members of the Grand Council of Santa Vittoria went through the Fat Gate and started down the mountain. Every so often they stopped to listen for the sound of a reed whistle, but when they

heard nothing they went on.

The men had done a good job. They had done a fine job. It is not too much to say that it is doubtful if such a wall could have been built in such time and under such circumstances in many parts of the world. It is not to boast, but it is a fact and part of history that Italians have a genius for stone and brick.

From the floor of the cellar entrance in the back wall of the Big Room to the arched ceiling, the bricks had been fitted with enormous care, shaped and fitted to the old bricks of the wall so that they looked as if they had grown there and not been laid by the hand of man.

"You have done a great thing for yourself and for the people of Santa Vittoria," Bombolini said. He cried. What had been that morning a gaping entrance to a great ancient wine-filled cellar was now one solid blank wall. The cellar and the wine were gone.

Many of the men were already asleep on the floor and others, too tired to listen and even to sleep, rested against the wall, so almost none of them, the first time at least, heard what was said.

"The wall will have to come down," Tufa said.

The ones who heard him, or wanted to hear him, turned around.

"Why did you say that, Tufa?"

"The wall will have to come down," he said again.

"It's no good," he said. "The wall won't do. It will have to come down."

When they turned back to the false wall, all of them could see it then.

"It stands out like a new grave," one of them said.

"Like a priest in a whorehouse," Babbaluche said.

Bombolini and Tufa and the others coming from the Roman cellar were halfway up the mountain then, and none of them had said a word. They were too tired then and too disappointed. They had come that far, they had come that close to succeeding, they had licked it and so they knew the taste of it, and now it was denied to them. *All of the pieces had fitted into place except the last one, the main one, the doorway to the wine.*

"Let's not tell the people," Bombolini said. "It won't do them any good to know."

The false wall was coming down. Even from where they were on the mountain they could hear the first of the bricks being dropped into the great copper kettles that we use here to blend all the wines

and ingredients that go into our vermouth. The kettles, the most valuable property in Santa Vittoria, had been brought down the mountain to be hidden behind the wall along with the wine, so that they wouldn't be taken too.

The problem with the wall had been the bricks. They were not new, they were very old bricks, but they were bricks that had been bleached by several hundred years of sun and leached by thousands of winter rains and scoured by winds too numerous to be considered. As Babbaluche had said, they stood out in the darkness of the rest of the back wall like a monk in a house of pleasure. Now they were being dyed. The credit for this belongs to Old Vines. The bricks were being dumped into the huge copper kettles which had been filled with several hundred bottles of our best red vermouth, a painful way to use good wine.

Bricks drink. They absorbed the wine, they drank it into their open pores, and they turned a deep, rich, dark red, as dark and rich as the wine itself. While the bricks drank, the bricklayers were painting the rest of the wall around the opening with the wine so that when the false wall rose again, the bricks would blend and belong to one another.

"It's as I said," Old Vines said. "The wine will save the wine."

When there were ten minutes less than an hour left, since Captain von Prum had estimated it would take them fifty minutes to cross the valley and go up the mountain, he struck the flat of his hand against the sidecar, making a hollow *boom*, and raised his hand and shouted 'Forward," and the convoy moved out of the shade of the beech tree and onto the River Road. It is difficult to see the track that turns off to Santa Vittoria, since it dips down off the road so suddenly, but Sergeant Traub saw it in time and turned off the road a little faster than he would have liked, steeply down, and at the first turn in the track, far sooner than he had expected it to be, was the cart, and he was forced to apply his brakes so sharply that von Prum was almost thrown out of the sidecar and the truck behind them came close to hitting them.

Traub got off the seat to examine the cart. "I never saw one like it before," he said. He spun one of the heavy iron rimmed wheels. "Oak," he said. "Like iron. It's as heavy as a tank."

"Can we get around it? Can we lift it off?"

Traub told the captain no.

"Can you hit it with one shot?"

"I can hit anything with one shot if it isn't shooting back at me," the sergeant said.

"I'm sure they're all looking from the town," von Prum said. "This will be a lesson."

They unhitched the light dual-purpose gun from the back of the truck and they ran it up onto the edge of the River Road to give Traub aiming room. He was careful about it, a little longer than von Prum would have wished, but he made the first shot good. It hit near the heart of the cart and it split the oak grain and a shower of splinters flew out. He hit it again and again after that, until it came apart and looked naked and disgraceful in the sand.

"You want to hit something else?" the captain asked.

"Yes."

Out of all the grays and the dull reds and oranges, out of the sun-bruised brick and stone and plaster, the coloring of stone and smoke and old age that is Santa Vittoria, one piece of color stands out above all the colors of the city, the red-and-blue sign of the Cinzano company on the roof of the Cooperative Wine Cellar.

"That?" von Prum said. "Do you think you could hit it?"

The sergeant nodded.

The first shot went over the top of the sign and landed someplace up on the mountain behind the city. He told us later that he fired this way so that no one would be hurt. By that shot he was able to adjust his fire, and the second shot struck the sign and exploded against it. When it didn't go down right away, he fired a third shot and the sign started down then, falling off the roof like a goose or a wild swan that has been hit with shot but is unwilling to die at once because of it.

"I think we've made our first impression," Captain von Prum said.

They moved slowly after that, to keep down the dust and because the road was not fit for a speed much faster than that of an ox.

When they were halfway up the mountain they stopped to allow the engines of their vehicles to cool. Among the vines and beneath the leaves they could see people hiding in the shadows or people sleeping.

"Now prepare yourself for the Italian pageantry," Captain von Prum told the sergeant. There would be the mayor of the city in his one black suit stained with wine and manure, and several old men

holding flags and with their medals from the other war dangling from their worn shirts, and there would be the members of the Fascist party swearing undying allegiance to those who had come to conquer them, the captain told him. It was ten minutes before five o'clock.

Just before they started up again Captain von Prum sampled some of the grapes that grew alongside the cart track and they were bitter. Paolo Lapolla had the bad fortune to be near them.

"What's the matter with your grapes?" von Prum asked Paolo.

At first Paolo found it impossible to find his tongue. "They aren't ripe yet," he finally said. "You came too soon."

It caused the Germans to laugh. "When would you have wished us to come, next year?"

"Later, later," Paolo said. "Much later."

"Your grapes are bitter. How is your wine?"

"Ah, the wine," Paolo said. "The wine is something else. You must try some of it sometime."

"Ah, we will," von Prum said, "we will."

Paolo was frightened by the loudness of their laughter.

"You speak very good Italian," Paolo said.

"So do you," von Prum said.

"Yes, I was born right here, Your Excellency," Paolo said.

At the Fat Gate and wherever they could see down into the terraces they were fearful about Paolo and what he might say, but Bombolini, when they told him, had no fear. As the Master side, it is sometimes the highest form of wisdom to simulate folly, and at this Paolo was a master, for it is something every Santa Vittorian learns by the time he leaves the breast.

There were, in the center of the piazza only two people: Italo Bombolini, the mayor, and Emilio Vittorini in the dress uniform of his old regiment. And behind them was the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle.

The motorcycle was the first to come into the piazza. Because of the steepness of the Corso the people could not see it until it had come up onto the lip of the street where for a moment it seemed to waver and hang suspended, half in the piazza and half in the Corso. Then it seemed to catch hold of the cobblestones of the piazza and to explode out into it.

They must have seen the two men but they didn't go directly toward them but turned to the right and circled the piazza, roaring

along the rim of people, who were pressed back against the walls of the houses, and going all the way around the piazza and back to where the Corso begins. Bombolini and Vittorini kept turning with them so that they would always be facing them, much as the matador does when a bull is on the loose in the arena. Once was not enough for them and they went around the piazza a second time, until the truck and the little cannon had ground up into the piazza and could follow them. They went faster this time, with a great noise of engines and the crying of rubber on the stones. It was impressive. It was terribly impressive. There had been a great many who had denied that any motor vehicle could ever come up the Corso and get into the piazza. At a sign from the officer, the truck pulled to one side of the square and the soldiers leaped from the truck and unhitched the gun and pointed it out across at the people. And when this was done, the motorcycle very sharply turned and only then headed directly toward the two men.

Vittorini's wife shouted for him to jump, but everyone knew Vittorini would never move. It seemed to us then that Bombolini would be forced to break and run if the machine was not to hit him, but he too stood in the piazza as if this was the ordained thing to do. Some in the piazza at that moment turned away, but the motorcycle, with a terrible screeching of brakes, came to a stop less than a foot away from the two of them and actually at the edge of Bombolini's shoe.

"Welcome to the Free City of Santa Vittoria," Bombolini shouted above the sound of the engine. "We of this city know that in times of war . . ."

It was the last they heard, as Traub raced the engine and the mayor's voice was lost beneath it.

"Pay attention," Traub shouted. He shut off the engine. Captain von Prum rose in the sidecar.

"Have sixteen mattresses delivered into this piazza within the next twenty minutes," von Prum ordered.

Vittorini now had come to full attention and was beginning the execution of a formal military salute.

"We know that in time of war—" Bombolini began.

"Quiet," Sergeant Traub shouted.

"Sixteen," von Prum said to Bombolini. "Did you understand that?"

Bombolini nodded his head.

"I want you to know, sir, that we are willing and anxious to cooperate with you as guests of the city, exactly as we would do if we were running an inn."

"With no bedbugs," Traub shouted. "With no lice. With no ticks. With no bugs of any kind."

Bombolini continued to talk, but they didn't hear him. The sergeant had gotten down from the seat of the motorcycle and had gone around and opened the door of the sidecar for the captain.

"Words flow out of his mouth like piss from that turtle," Captain von Prum said. They began to walk toward the fountain.

"Go ahead," von Prum called to Bombolini. "Keep talking."

They walked around the fountain and examined it carefully and came back past Vittorini, and the captain touched the old soldier's epaulets.

"Do you know that a museum would give you good money for these?" he said. Vittorini was still at parade salute. Von Prum stopped in front of the mayor.

"Why did you stop talking?" he asked.

"I had nothing further to say," Bombolini said.

"Do you expect us to believe that?" von Prum said. "Would you like to hear what the sergeant said about you?"

Bombolini nodded his head. "He said you were like the piazza; very large and very empty."

He had said the words very loudly, and someone in the piazza laughed. It was Babbaluche.

"And what is he doing?" von Prum said.

"He is waiting for you to return his salute, sir." Vittorini's arm and even his body were now trembling from the effort of holding the salute.

"But why should I do that?" von Prum said.

"Because he is an old soldier, sir."

"Oh, is that what he is?"

Von Prum took several steps away from Bombolini and came to a stop in front of him and came to attention. He lifted his arm and shouted "Heil Hitler."

"Long live Italy," Vittorini said.

"It is my hope that we can find a way of living here that will be profitable for both of us," Bombolini said.

CHAPTER V

THE SHAME OF SANTA VITTORIA

THOSE first days of the occupation were good ones for the people of the city. They had set themselves for something bad to happen, and nothing bad had taken place. The weather for the grapes had turned good again, and when this happens things are always good in Santa Vittoria, no matter what else may be happening. But beyond that was the fact that we all were after the same thing. The Germans wanted us to cooperate with them, and we couldn't find enough ways to do it.

At the start it had been Captain von Prum's policy to show a strong, hard hand and then, when the people were properly conditioned, to show them that the rock in his breast was actually a heart and that he was human. He wrote about it. "My plan is to be a benevolent despot up here," he put in his personal log, "but to be benevolent one must first be the despot."

On that first night, for example, a curfew was set for eight o'clock at night. It was too late to warn the bricklayers, and when they came up the mountain at ten o'clock, after finishing the second wine-dark wall, they were jailed for breaking the curfew and they were whipped.

"I am sorry to have to do this, but these men have broken the rules and must be punished for it," the captain said.

"It's only correct," Bombolini said. "They have been bad and deserve it."

The bricklayers didn't mind. They were so tired they were numb, and later said they had barely felt the blows. Nothing mattered to them. Some of them slept all through the three days of their confinement and never missed the food they were supposed to be deprived of.

Padre Polenta was arrested and brought down from the bell tower for using his light at night.

"And what was your aim?" Captain von Prum asked him. "To guide the bombers in?"

"I was at God's work," Polenta said.

"One week on bread and water for God's work," the captain said.

"Why not a few strokes of the lash as well," Bombolini offered. "He might have gotten us all blown up."

These weren't the only ones. Many people were arrested that first

week and treated roughly, but it was the fines that bothered the people most. They cleaned up the dung hills in Old Town and they fined people who emptied their night jars in the streets outside their doors. They beat the people who opened their doors after eight o'clock or who showed a light of any kind.

There was a great deal of smiling going on in Santa Vittoria those first weeks. We smiled at the soldiers, and although they were supposed to be firm, they began to respond and smile back. There was a great deal of saying "Good morning" and "Good evening." We learned the name of the captain and used it. "Good morning, Captain von Prum," "How are you today, Captain von Prum?" When he walked down the Corso Cavour they said his name so often, von Prum, von Prum, that it sounded as if someone was filling a barrel with apples.

And then we had the Good Time Boys. These were groups of younger men whose job it was to drink with the German soldiers and to play cards with them and smile at them. They met in the soldiers' quarters, in the wine cellar office, and it was a convenient place. They were next to the source of wine and, as Babbaluche said, what better place for rabbits than the edge of the rabbit garden.

The people would say, "Are they in it? Have they gone over the fence?" And the Good Time Boys would tell them, "They're looking. They're nibbling."

They would look at the wine and rub their jaws, but they never took any of it. The Good Time Boys went in shifts. Some dropped around in the morning to share an eye opener of *grappa* and some in the middle of the morning for a little pick-me-up of vermouth and some to bring wine for lunch and an after-nap refresher, and in the evening the serious drinking began with the card playing. The result was that the Germans and the Italians became friends, and the Germans were drunk a good deal of the time and some of them drunk all of the time. They would fall on their blankets at night and smile at us with those cowlike drunk blue eyes of theirs.

There is a saying in this country and it must be true. "No one knows his own servants as badly as the master." Captain von Prum saw none of it. Tufa put it this way: "Until his own life is at stake an officer can never know what is going on with his own men."

Von Prum's mind was on other matters. He was exuberant about the way the first phase of the Bloodless Victory was proceeding. It

was going beyond his highest hopes. It was so successful that he finally felt he must speak to the Italian mayor, and he summoned Bombolini to his office on the evening of his eighth day in Santa Vittoria.

"You are so cooperative with us. Why?" von Prum said. "There must be a reason." He had intended to shock the mayor.

"The obvious one," Bombolini told him. "It is selfish, I suppose. If we help you we hope that maybe you won't hurt us. We hope that you might even help us."

"So you would be willing to cooperate with the German if it meant preserving yourself?"

"The first duty of every Italian is to preserve himself," Bombolini said. "What good does it do me or my country if I get killed? Right?"

"Very mature way of thinking," von Prum said.

"They are marvelous in their way," von Prum wrote to his father. "They are disgusting, of course, and yet at the same time there is a realism about them that can't be denied. This afternoon the clown, this Bombolini, had a proposition for me. He would cooperate with me in *anything*—his word, *anything*—if I would let him in on it first, so that he could at least offer his views on how it might be done so that it would work and yet cost them as little as possible. He becomes riper by the hour. I have prepared a little test for him to test the quality of his sincerity."

The test was to make an inventory of Santa Vittoria; to count all the houses and all the people, to list all machinery, to count all tools, and to report the number of bottles of wine in the Cooperative Wine Cellar.

"The wine?" Bombolini said. "Why the wine?"

"Yes, the wine. It's a property," the German said. "What makes you surprised about that? It's what you make your living on."

"Yes, but the wine . . . you see, the wine here . . ." Bombolini said, and then didn't go on.

"You wanted to cooperate," von Prum said. "You came to me."

Bombolini shrugged his shoulders. "There's a lot of wine," he said. "We don't count so well."

"How many are you going to tell him?" Old Vines asked Bombolini.

"How many bottles are there?"

"Three hundred and seventeen thousand," the cellar master said.

"I don't know. I'm not sure," the mayor said.

"Tell him two hundred thousand," Pietrosanto suggested. "He'll never know."

Everyone agreed that Pietrosanto was right.

It was very strange. At first everyone had been concerned with saving the wine in the Roman cellar and had already given the wine in the Rabbit Garden away. But as the days went by and the Germans didn't go down the mountain and look into the cellar, they began to hope that they could get away with saving half of the Rabbit Garden too. Bombolini was a little wiser than the rest of them. He went to the captain's headquarters the next night.

"Three hundred and two thousand bottles," Bombolini told him.

The German smiled at him. "Your counting isn't very accurate," the captain said. "The right number is three hundred and seventeen thousand bottles. We counted them last night."

Bombolini pretended to be greatly embarrassed. "I warned you that we don't count so well."

"Isn't it odd that the number would be too few and not too many?" Captain von Prum said. But they both smiled at one another and Bombolini knew he had done the correct thing. It was only natural that he would lie. It was expected of him; it was in truth, he knew, required of him. Everyone is fearful and suspicious of the too-honest man. He had lied, but just a little bit. For the most part he had told the truth.

When Bombolini had gone, the captain called his sergeant in.

"He's a liar like all of them, but he's just a little one. I couldn't expect it any other way. He has to protect his people, too, you know."

"I don't know, sir," Sergeant Traub said. "You know what they say, never trust the wop."

"That can limit you, you know. You can become so suspicious of people that you can do nothing with them in the end. Fifteen thousand out of three hundred thousand bottles is about right, Sergeant. I'd do the same myself, I think."

So he wrote that night in his log, it is dated: "He can be trusted to work with us. I will have to stand on that. He passed the test."

We called the secret wine, the secret wall, the entire secret, "the thing."

"How's the thing getting along?" someone would ask someone

who went to the Roman cellar.

"It's all right," he would answer. "It's growing older. It's growing a beard."

They worked on the wall every day. Men were stationed all the way down the track in the terraces to sound an alarm if the Germans were to come down, but they never did. They continued to paint the bricks, until even to those who knew and worked on them there no longer was any way to tell which part of the wall was real and which was false. "Right here. Here's where the wall starts," they would say and tap the stones and find they were wrong.

The cellar was filled with lichens and mosses and fungus, and they had taken these growths and transferred them to parts of the new wall, and some had taken hold of the stained bricks. This was the beard that the thing was growing.

The people had confidence in their thing, and the feeling grew so strong that some of them began to object to the way Bombolini acted with the German.

"I know he has to deal with him, but does he have to crawl before him?" a member of the Grand Council said.

"It's not manly," one of the Pietrosantos said. "No man with any real eggs could do such a thing."

"If we have *him* for a leader," one of them said, "what must the Germans think of *us?*"

"I agree with what Fabio said," a young man said. "It's time we got our honor back and showed them we can be brave too."

It had been a meeting, and after the meeting the men went out into the Piazza of the People, where they saw the soldier who we called Private Impossible, because no one could pronounce his name, putting up a strange-looking machine at one end of the piazza.

"What is it?" Bombolini asked.

"You turn the handle, see," the soldier said, "and sausage comes out the other end. Try it."

The mayor turned the handle and a terrible sound, a scream of loneliness, filled the piazza. It was a sound that one might expect to hear from the cave when the evil spirits controlled it. Von Prum had joined them.

"An air-raid alarm," he said. "Now all we need is the proper shelter."

He said afterwards, Bombolini, that at that moment there was

the feeling of a shadow passing over his mind.

"The church would be good," Bombolini said. "It's strong and there's a deep cellar and, besides, they never bomb a church. God won't let them bomb a church."

It caused the German to laugh and then he looked at all of them, and it was a look of disdain.

"There is a better place than that," he said.

When he left they looked at each other, and none of them said anything, but they looked at one another and the words formed on their lips.

He knows. He knows.

"We should kill him now," Pietrosanto said.

"No," Bombolini said. "Not now, not yet."

Von Prum came to the point at once. "You have one of the finest air-raid shelters I have ever seen and you mention the church to me," the captain said. "I'm surprised at you."

Bombolini said nothing to this. He looked at the stones of the floor as if they were the most important objects in the world. He turned his head to the left and to the right, and he bent down to look at the stones again.

"Sometimes it takes an outsider to see things an insider cannot see," von Prum said.

"We don't go in there," Bombolini said. "It's filled with evil spirits."

"Oh. So you know where I mean?"

Why must he play this game? the mayor thought. "Yes, I know," he said.

"It used to be an ancient wine cellar, I believe," von Prum said. "Roman, perhaps. Or even Etruscan. I would not discount Etruscan."

"I wouldn't know. No one goes in there."

"Someone goes in there," von Prum said. *"Someone."*

The mayor said nothing. There was no further use for a fight or for lies, he felt.

"There is a string of electric light bulbs in there." Von Prum's voice was harsh now. "What are you hiding in there?"

Bombolini was only able to lift his hands in front of him as if the German was about to strike him.

"Who uses it?"

He could bring himself to say nothing.

"The Resistance," von Prum said. "You allow them in there. You harbor them."

"No,it isn't true," Bombolini said, but it was a shout.

I must not laugh. Oh, God, I must not laugh aloud.

"It's true," the German said, and Bombolini lowered his arms and then his head. Von Prum looked at the mayor and finally laughed at him.

"They say the Italians are good liars, that you are all good actors. It isn't so. You're a rotten liar."

Instead of laughing, Bombolini found that he wanted to weep.

"You will get them out of there and keep them out of there."

"Yes."

"You lied to me about the wine."

"Yes. Not much of a lie."

"You *lied*."

"Yes."

"And you lied about this."

"Yes." Then he looked up at the captain and was serious. "I am not a good liar," he said. "I won't lie to you again."

"It does you no good."

"I am ashamed," Bombolini said.

"Despite your behavior I have decided to continue the policy of informing you about affairs. Tomorrow night we will commence using the cellar at the foot of the mountain as a shelter."

"I understand. I am grateful to you."

"You should be grateful," von Prum said.

"But it is the evil spirits," Bombolini said. "You must understand. The people would rather face the bombs."

What Bombolini was unable to understand then was that von Prum needed the people as much as he himself did. Without the people there would be no Bloodless Victory.

"I have thought of that. I am going to have your priest—what is his name?"

The mayor told him.

"We will have this Polenta sanctify the place first. There is a ritual, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"They say it is very beautiful and very impressive and very effec-

tive," the German said. "We will have a ceremony and we will purify the place."

"I am grateful to you."

"We will clean it out."

He wrote that night: "I have a man here now who is grateful to me. He owes me everything. The time is right."

But they didn't get into the cellar, not then at least, because something happened the next morning that was to change the whole course of events in Santa Vittoria, not only for them but in some ways for generations to come and perhaps for all time to come, as long as this city clings to its mountain. A little after sunrise a messenger came up the cart track and stopped at the Fat Gate.

"To be delivered by hand," he said.

"You'll never get that motorcycle up there," Impossible told him. "I'll take it up if you want. I'm going up there now."

The young man looked up the length of the Corso and at the rows of stone steps, and handed over the message.

"By hand," he said.

"I heard you," Impossible said. But he didn't go up then. He stopped first at the wine cellar office and had an eye opener of *grappa* with some of the Good Time Boys, and in the end the message went up the Corso in the hands of Paolo Lapolla. He took it, of course, to Bombolini first. They could not read a word of it. With his knowledge of English, Roberto was able to figure out a few of the words.

"All I can tell you is this, that it's about the wine," Roberto said.

Babbaluche was beside himself. "O Christ above!" he cried out. "This is the kind of country we are. We deserve to die. We deserve everything that happens to us. Here we are, handed the plans of the enemy and we are too Goddamn dumb and stupid and uneducated to *read* them."

We only found out later that the paper was the official order authorizing the taking of the wine.

They waited all of that morning for von Prum to make his move. In the afternoon he summoned Bombolini.

"I am asking you to be mature," von Prum said.

"Mature, yes," Bombolini said. "What is it they want?"

The directness of the question had upset the order of the captain's approach and he was for the moment off balance. Many men might

not have recovered it, not in the manner that von Prum did. In the end he turned it to his advantage.

"Some wine," he said. "Are you strong? Are you able to hear it?" Bombolini nodded.

"They want your wine."

It is not necessary here to put down all the things Bombolini did after that. He did what was expected of him, he did what he had been rehearsing every night in his sleep since the day they had hid the wine. He slapped his hand over his heart as if he were suffering a stroke and shouted, "The wine!" and he gripped the region of his heart as if he were squeezing a grapefruit.

"They want our wine?" he cried, and he fell to the floor.

It was only the start. It is embarrassing today to put down all the rest that he did—the running into the piazza and the bathing of his head in the fountain, the cries and the tears, the hitting of his head against a stone wall, the drinking of a bottle of wine without taking the bottle from his lips, always with cries of "No . . . Never . . . No . . . No . . . Never . . . No . . . It is too much . . . too much," and finally running back into the headquarters with eyes as wild as those of a calf who has been hit with the sledgehammer and who has not died but has gotten loose from the ropes that hold him. In the end he collapsed where von Prum could talk to him.

It was the signal, of course. Everyone knew then. The Rabbit had gone over the fence. The Rabbit was in the garden. The Rabbit was eating. The Rabbit was gorging himself.

"In the name of God," Bombolini shouted. "The wine is *us*."

"You must stop," von Prum ordered him. "I trusted you, as a mature man."

"But my God above, the wine. The *wine!*"

The German leaned down toward him then. His voice was almost a whisper. "It is not all that you think," he said. "You must hear me."

"The body and blood of my people." He tried to sit up. "Captain von Prum, I want you to shoot me, to destroy me now."

The captain wouldn't listen to him. Instead, he would try the last trump, short of violence, that he held in his hand.

"I have a proposition to make to you," he said.

Bombolini succeeded in sitting up.

"Didn't I know when I said that," von Prum wrote later, "that the

wop would listen? His face lit up, the tears went away, his tongue hung out, his eyes bulged at the word. They are all alike; they are Arabs in their souls."

And the captain told him. In payment for the cost of occupying and thus protecting their town, the town would be required to surrender its stock of wine.

"It's like paying an intruder to sleep in your bed with your wife," Bombolini said.

Part of the wine would be considered a payment, but part would be considered a loan to the German government which would be returned with interest when the war was won.

"What if you lose?" Bombolini said.

Von Prum went on then to the proposition. Because transportation was becoming increasingly hard to obtain, any city that would volunteer to bring its own wine to the railhead at Montefalcone could retain for itself some part of the wine.

"How much?" Bombolini said.

They began at twenty per cent.

"I can't ask my people to rape themselves for that amount," the mayor said.

"I could force them."

"No, this can't be done by force," Bombolini said, and the German knew he was correct.

"I ask you one thing. Has this been done by any other town?"

The German was honest about it. He told him that it hadn't.

"Then the price will be fifty per cent for you and fifty per cent to stay with us."

There was good feeling, and it remained in the city until the morning we were due to carry the wine to Montefalcone. The feeling remained even when it was found that the order which von Prum had shown to Bombolini had required him to requisition only fifty per cent of the wine in the first place.

Maybe we are realists. We were content with our victory, it was more wine than we had counted on, and we were content to let the German have his.

No one here likes to look back on the journey to Montefalcone. It began as if we were going on a picnic, and it ended in misery. Tufa tried to tell us, but no one listened to Tufa, because no one wanted

to hear what he had to say.

"Have you made any arrangements for anyone dying?" Tufa asked Pietrosanto, who was the leader of the march.

"Why should anyone die?"

"You had better plan for someone dying," Tufa said.

We should have known better, but Tufa alone seemed to know what was involved in carrying 150,000 bottles of wine so many miles by so many mules and donkeys and oxen and carts and people and backs all the way over the hills to Montefalcone. Some of us can still recall Tufa's words as we started through the Fat Gate and down the mountain for the River Road. The sun was not quite up then and it was cool and damp, and we felt light and as if we could go on forever.

"This will be a terrible day for Santa Vittoria," Tufa said.

"Do you know that sometimes you are a troublemaker?" Pietrosanto said. "You've seen some bad days and think that all of them are bad. We were all right before you came along."

The people were actually gay at the beginning.

"They should be crying," Sergeant Traub said. "I tell you, I don't understand these people."

"They have accepted what can't be changed," Captain von Prum said. "Why not make the best of it? As this Bombolini says, the people are realists."

"I don't know," Traub said. "I don't know." By his standards it was carrying realism too far.

The trip down the mountain, even in the dimness before dawn, was easy, because the people know the mountain and how to take it and they know every stone on it and every turn and hole where one might twist an ankle. When we reached the River Road the sun was up and the column began to spread out along the road. The wine baskets on the people's backs began to get hot and heavy even then. Many of the people had never been to Montefalcone before, and they looked ahead toward it as an adventure although Montefalcone was many miles away and out of sight.

When we passed Scarafaggio the people all stood in the Piazza of the Brass Urinal, their mouths gaping open wider than usual, and pointed down the hill at us and then began running. I could tell you the story of how the piazza got its name, how they came to Santa Vittoria and stole a huge brass urn we used for the wine during the

harvest festival and how they used it for a public urinal and how we then went down and put dynamite in the pot and blew it into a thousand pieces so that every home in the city had some brass chip of Santa Vittoria in it, but the story is too long and involved and sad. They came down their mountain and across their part of the valley until they were lined up along the opposite bank of the Mad River, where they stared at us.

"What do you think you're doing?" one of them finally shouted to us. "What are you doing with the wine? What are they making you do with it?"

No one bothered to answer them, because they were Scarafaggians and because breath already was becoming valuable and because how do you explain to people that you are helping to steal your own wine?"

At the first of the hills the first of the people began to fall out of the line of march. The Germans had made some effort to keep order on the way.

"I don't care where it is or what it is," Sergeant Traub said, "A line of march is a line of march." But at the hills it was no good. The soldiers stopped prodding the people with their rifles. "I take it back," the sergeant said. "A line of march is a line of march everywhere but in Italy."

By midday those who could march had settled into themselves and had developed a rhythm, an almost silent, shuffling cadence, that pulled people along with it, the same way it had been on the day of the passing of the wine. There was the sound and then the smells that chained the people to each other, of sweat and leather and salt against the wicker of the baskets, of urine and oxen and manure and the stale water of the drainage ditch alongside the road, and the sound of the Mad River itself, rushing against the stones and boulders in its bed.

Sometime in the evening, fourteen hours after we had started in the coolness of the morning, the first of us started up the steep side road that leads to the Constantine Gate and then Montefalcone itself.

This was the cruelest part, the last long hill before the end and, after that, the people who met us. The word had gone down the river that the people of Santa Vittoria were surrendering their own wine and bringing it in on their backs. The streets of Montefalcone were

lined with people and they were making a great noise, and for a moment we thought they were cheering us in. How simple we must have been! Why should we have thought they would do such a thing?

The first one was a butcher. He broke away from the sidewalk along the main Corso and out in front of us, his apron spattered with blood, and he was holding the skull of a goat in his hands, and he was screaming. "Tell me these are lying." He put his bloody hands to his eyes. "Tell me I'm not seeing what I see."

"Don't look at him," Tufa said.

"Tell me, just tell me. I will believe you," he screamed at us. "Because I cannot believe what I see." He shoved the goat's head into Tufa's face and tried to pull the wine off his back. "No son of Italy could be doing what I see you people doing. Tell me you are Greeks."

And this was the beginning. It is too painful to tell the rest. They spat on us, on our heads and in our faces, they grabbed our hair and lifted up our heads so that our faces, looking down at the stones, could be seen by everyone. The priests in the streets turned away from us and one of them encouraged a boy to urinate on our heads from a terrace of the rectory. An Italian soldier in the pay of the Germans aimed his rifle at our heads.

A woman who appeared to be a respectable woman broke through the line of German soldiers, who now were needed to protect us from our own people, and she ran to Tufa, who was in the lead, and she seized him by his private parts.

"Did you see?" she screamed to them. She held on her arms and then turned her palms downward. "Nothing," she cried out. "I swear to you, *nothing*." She ran along the line of people. "I felt nothing. No eggs," the woman shouted. "They have no eggs."

We have never lived it down. Even later, when they learned why we had done what we did we were not excused. "I don't care," they would say. "Only bastards could do it." When people from here go to Montefalcone they don't tell where they are from.

"Santa Vittoria?" they would say in Montefalcone. "Oh yes, that's the place where the men have no eggs. It's been proven."

In the end, to add to the shame, it was the Germans who saved us and they despised us for having to do it. Captain von Prum had sent a soldier ahead, so that when we came into the Piazza Frossim-

harvest festival and how they used it for a public urinal and how we then went down and put dynamite in the pot and blew it into a thousand pieces so that every home in the city had some brass chip of Santa Vittoria in it, but the story is too long and involved and sad. They came down their mountain and across their part of the valley until they were lined up along the opposite bank of the Mad River, where they stared at us.

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bone (where none of us can bear to walk) on our way with the wine to the railroad yards in back of the city, Colonel Scheer was on the terrace of his headquarters with other officers of his command. We marched in front of them with our wine, now *their* wine, in the same manner that Fabio tells us the slaves were marched in front of Caesar when the armies came back from their wars.

"I salute you," Colonel Scheer called to Captain von Prum. "We all salute you."

The people of Santa Vittoria, bent with their loads and with their shame, filed by the German officers.

"I don't know how you have done this," the colonel called to the captain. He sent a young officer down to pinch one of our people to see if it was real.

The officer pinched Guido Pietrosanto's face. "Yes, they're real people," he said.

When Captain von Prum passed in front of the steps on which Scheer stood, the colonel stopped him. "Unless I am mistaken you are soon to be Major Sepp von Prum. How does that sound?"

Captain von Prum told him that it sounded very pleasant.

"And about the other thing"—Colonel Scheer tapped the region of his chest where a medal would go—"I haven't forgotten. I don't go back on my word."

It was one of the few times that we ever saw the captain openly smile.

After the wine had been taken, the days continued good. Each day the grapes grew fatter. Old Vines told us that he could hear them growing in the warm nights, fattening in their skins, pushing out against their sides. The wine had been taken and even if the false wall was noticed, which no longer seemed likely to us, there would be no reason to be concerned about it. Why should anyone be looking for something, we asked each other, when nothing was missing? Santa Vittoria could be said to be confident of itself. Italy might be falling apart, but that was Italy's problem.

One of the strange things was the growing friendship between Captain von Prum and Italo Bombolini. It is said that every German has a desire to sweep his neighbor's dirty steps, and in this sense von Prum was no exception. He began by remaking the mayor. He saw to it that the mayor shaved each day and that his hair was

cut and kept trimmed. In September, on Bombolini's forty-eighth birthday, the German sent his measurements to Montefalcone and a few weeks later a suit came back purchased with von Prum's money.

"If you are going to share the leadership of the city," von Prum said, "then I want you to be worthy of me."

One morning, very early, the morning of the day on which Captain von Prum received the message that was to change things here so swiftly and so terribly. It was not an official letter and it was written by hand.

Von Prum:

This is not what you expected to receive; it is not what I expected to send.

I submitted your name for promotion and decoration as promised.

Both requests were rejected.

They have ridiculed your performance and through it my endorsement.

A study of sales figures for the past 20 years obtained from wine wholesalers in this city and from the Cinzano company reveals the fact that your quota of wine should have approached 600,000 bottles and not the 150,000 bottles that you so "miraculously" brought to Montefalcone.

The question is very simple: Where is the rest of the wine?

An accounting will be expected from you by ten o'clock tomorrow morning.

Scheer

He went into his room and closed the door, and he was not seen again until evening. There were obvious conclusions. They would claim that he had managed to get the people to carry the wine by letting them keep most of it. A check of the remaining wine would answer that.

It could be claimed that it was a simple case of thievery and collusion—that, in return for money or rewards to be paid after the war, he had taken the wine not for the Fatherland but for personal gain. The wine in that case would have to be hidden somewhere and it could be found.

It could be a case of cowardice as happened at San Pietro di Camano, where the people had warned the officer in command that if the wine went, no matter what, he would die, and he believed them and turned in false reports about the wine. The Germans obliged him by doing the killing.

Or there could be wine hidden somewhere in the city and he had been fooled. There was wine and he had been made a fool of, there was actually wine and he was the fool of Italo Bombolini. He was not ready to believe any of this. The answer, he was convinced, lay somewhere else.

He made a mistake that afternoon. He left Constanzia Pietrosanto's house and began to walk through the city, looking up the lanes, sizing up the city, moving swiftly and restlessly, an intelligent curiosity, the expression of the fox looking for a proper hiding place before leading the hounds on a chase informing his face and so informing us.

Everyone knew. So the element of surprise which every good soldier covets was lost to him. In the evening he came back up into the Piazza of the People and everyone knew and was waiting, and when he saw Italo Bombolini with the others around the fountain he went, as was his way, directly toward them. He didn't want the mayor alone, he wanted the eyes of the others as well. His own eyes were hard and cold, and yet disinterested, as if the question was one of curiosity and not of importance. His voice was just as cold and as level and as impersonal.

"I know now," he said. "Where is the rest of the wine?"

"The rest of what wine?" Bombolini said. His face showed shock and anger.

"The rest of *all* the wine."

"You can't have the rest of the wine," Bombolini said. He was beginning to shout, and the men around him were angered. "That wine is our wine. You promised us. Are you lying? Is the word of a German officer nothing but shit?"

"You know what wine I'm referring to."

"We will fight for the rest of the wine, Captain. We will fight because there is nothing left for us but to fight."

"We will die then," Pietrosanto said, "and God damn you, you will die with us."

Someone stopped him and put his arms around Pietro and

pulled him back across the piazza.

"He didn't mean it that way," the man shouted to von Prum. "It's only that the rest of our wine—it would be death to us."

It has been said here and it has been said by others that all Italians are actors and all of them know the subtleties of the good lie and perhaps again this is true, because all of them played their parts so well.

"Not that wine," the German was forced to say. "We don't take that wine. My word is my bond on that. The other wine."

And they came back around him then with their mouths open and their eyes dazed as if trying to see something and not being able to make it out, none of them with as much wisdom on their slack faces as was owned by Fungo or shouted aloud by Capoferro.

And so the German had to tell them about the records of the wholesalers and the records of the Cinzano people and the one million or more bottles of wine, and as he talked they looked at one another and their mouths fell open and they said, in low bewildered voices, "No, oh no, it couldn't be . . . there is something wrong . . . wrong . . . wrong . . ." When he was through one of them said that no people in the world could be that rich; and they all nodded and were silent.

It is a pride of many men who make it a habit to tell the truth that because they possess this virtue they are qualified to know when another man is telling a lie.

In von Prum's case, it was a belief that if you watch a man's lips as he talks and if you seal your eyes on his eyes, the man who is lying must falter and stammer and then turn away, because truth and honesty when confronted with the lie must overcome in the end. He should have known that a good lie is always better than the truth, because a lie has been tailored to look like the truth, but the truth is just its clumsy self. If you look at an Italian in the mouth when he is telling the truth he might stammer, but never when he is telling a good lie. The Master himself has said: Never tell the truth when a lie will do as well.

And so they convinced him. He already believed them, when Pietrosanto apologized for saying what he had and then asked the question, "But if we had a million bottles—*if*, mind you, Mother of God, *if*—where in the name of God would we put them? How do

you hide one million bottles of wine?"

The captain went to his room and he immediately wrote this letter.

I say this much with no fear of contradiction.

For reasons that I am now unable to understand I am forced to conclude that you have been falsely informed and that any further investigation by you can only bear this out.

On the following I stake my professional reputation, my personal reputation, my good name and that of my family which, as you know, is considerable.

Upon my word of honor: There is no other wine in the city of Santa Vittoria except that which the people have been authorized to keep.

The letter was sent to Montefalcone that evening and an answer was returned that night.

Dear von Prum:

Upon receipt of your letter I myself am forced to conclude that I have been misinformed and that a further investigation by our office can only bear this out.

Sleep well this night at least.

Scheer

After that he read Colonel Scheer's letter to Sergeant Traub, and it was so ridiculous to the sergeant that he was forced to gasp and then to laugh aloud.

"There's no wine," the sergeant said. "There's no place to hide it, and if they did hide it they couldn't keep a secret. You have to know them sir. They'll tell you everything there is to tell about and anything there is to talk about."

CHAPTER VI

THE NOOSE GROWS TIGHTER

It might be thought that the question of the missing wine would have separated the Germans from the Italians and made them suspicious of each other, but that wasn't the way it happened. It became as important to the Germans as it was to us that there be no other wine.

We discussed it with each other; for days thereafter it was the only thing we talked about, and we went over it and over it again the way a person does who is injured in a ridiculous way, trying to make some sense out of something that is senseless. For a time we talked about where they thought we could have hidden it.

"The logical place," Bombolini actually said, "would be the old Roman wine cellar. It's the only place big enough. But the wine isn't there."

After that, the talk advanced to the question of why someone would want to say that we had hidden the wine; and finally an answer came forth. It was decided that some of the wholesalers and some of the Cinzano people had altered their figures so that after the war they could file some kind of claim with either the Italian or the German government for confiscated wine which, of course, had never existed. It sounded so sensible that many of the people here began to believe it. And then we stopped talking about it entirely, because there is a belief here that if you dwell on one subject too long it can be harmful to the brain, and that just like a pool of water, the brain must be refreshed with new thoughts or it will become polluted and turn sour.

From time to time, when the wind was just right we heard from far away the booming rolling sounds of heavy guns. It interested the people, because if the Americans and the English came it meant that we were safe. But still there no longer was any real fear for the secret, because the feeling was strong that we had been tested and found not lacking, and that if any slip was to occur it would have happened long before this. We had learned to live with our secret.

One evening what Captain von Prum had feared took place. The people had come up from the terraces, which is what saved most of them, when some planes came over the city and dropped

some bombs. Most of them landed down in the terraces and damaged some vines, although not many, and several of them dropped among the houses in Old Town. We never knew who bombed us, the Germans or the English or the Italians or the Americans. Two or three old people were killed by the bombs and seven or eight other people were badly hurt.

It was the night after the bombing that the Roman cellar was turned into the air-raid shelter for the city of Santa Vittoria. At first the idea had been that in the event of a raid the people would be roused from bed by the air-raid siren and would take a blanket and start down the mountain, but for two reasons it was plain this wouldn't work. If the raid was a true raid the people would be dead before they ever reached their shelter; and if it wasn't, the journey down, the lack of sleep, the trip back up the mountain with the grapes growing fatter and needing more work and the harvest loming upon us, would kill the people just as surely as a real air raid. It was decided that the people would take down bedding and a few things to heat food in and the city of Santa Vittoria would be moved into the Roman cellar at night, within breathing distance of their wine.

The afternoon before the move Bombolini went down with Sergeant Traub and Corporal Heinsick and Captain von Prum.

"It's a remarkable place," the captain said. "It could take direct blows from any airplane in the world and everyone would be safe. Why is it so large?"

"It is said that it was the collection point for all of the wine in all of the region," Bombolini said. "It all belonged to one man. I think it was Julius Caesar. Yes, that's who it was."

"The large room is here, and then there is the wine cellar that goes back off it," the captain said. "It's a very peculiar shape. I wonder what was the need of all that wall along there?"

Bombolini said that he didn't know.

The people started down that evening, after working all that day. They carried mattresses and straw mats and blankets and anything that anyone could lie on. It was a mass migration of lice and bedbugs probably not equalled in this part of the world before. They took down jugs of water and bread and bottles of wine and pots of cooked cold beans and baskets of onions and jugs of oil to pour on the beans and the bread. Longo started up the lights again, and this

was a good thing to happen. By those pale dimming lights the false wall looked more natural than ever before.

At first the people who camped along by the false wall were afraid to talk loudly, as if the vibration of their voices might cause a brick to pop loose. They were even afraid to look at the wall. But that passed. As the cellar become crowded with pots and pans and kettles and chamber pots and bedclothes and people, the old Roman wine cellar ceased to be a wine cellar at all and became solely an air-raid shelter, run like some monstrous underground inn from the Dark Ages.

Even inside the tunnel we could hear the planes this night. There were more than usual and they were bombing somewhere in the area. It is our belief that they had no interest in Santa Vittoria but were going after the River Road and some of the bridges over the Mad River. There was a moon and the bridges would stand out over the white waters of the river.

We heard the bombs begin by the river and then we heard them start coming across the valley floor, giant strides of bombs, coming in our direction. There was no fear for ourselves, although there was fear for the people in the Palace of the People and there was fear for the grapes on the terraces.

Several of the German soldiers stopped playing and went outside and came back again when the bombs came closer.

"These are the big ones," one of the Germans called to us. "The big bastards. Americans."

After that they came louder and louder, and their force was stronger. We could feel the explosions then, through our feet, and dust began to fall from the arches above. The cellar was rumbling *from the pressure of the explosions, and there was a shaking of* things and even the mountain seemed to shake.

And then everyone seemed to see it at once, everyone was looking at it, everyone except the card players, all of us incapable of any movement, the way people are supposed to be before a poisonous snake—*frozen, frightened, unable to take one's eyes away from it.* The bombs were dropping on the side of the mountain and as they exploded, as if the shock were coming down through the rock veins of the mountain, the false wall began to swell and to puff out, and the bricks actually bulged and then all at once to sink back into place again until the next bomb landed on the mountain.

The false wall billowed out and sank back again, each time the bricks barely holding, as smoothly and almost as regularly as the swells at sea.

Then there was one great explosion, the heaviest of them all, and this time the bricks swelled out so far from the rest of the wall that it seemed impossible that we didn't hear the sound that we dreaded more than any in the world then, the *snap*, the first dry sound of the first brick popping, springing out from its framework in the wall.

The next explosion was a little less than that and the one after that far less, and we waited and waited until finally there were no more sounds at all and they were gone and it was over.

"It's all over," one of the Germans called to us. "They won't come again tonight."

The sigh from the people was like a wind that comes a night just before the rains begin. The next morning all of the people of Santa Vittoria went to Mass.

"And what is this?" von Prum asked.

"Deliverance Day," Bombolini said. "Every Santa Vittorian gives thanks to God for protecting the fruits of the harvest."

"I thought you weren't a religious man," the German said.

"I have become one today," Bombolini said.

They found that morning that the mortar that had held the bricks in place had shivered itself apart. If one man, an unknowing German, had leaned against the wall, the entire structure would have come down on top of him and the treasure been exposed. Later in the morning some of the men took a cartload of bricks out through the Fat Gate and into a field where one of the ventilators was located and they dropped the bricks down the shaft on the inside of the false wall. After that they took out enough of the bricks to allow three or four men to step inside the cellar, and then they put the bricks back and rebuilt the wall from the inside, twice as thick as before, except for one little section they crawled back through.

Something had gone wrong with the weather. In October it is dry here, hot in the day and cool at night, but on this morning the wind began to come from the southwest, hot and steaming and moist, and it settled down on the streets and lanes of the city and clogged the piazzas as if a wet hot shawl had been dropped on Santa Vittoria. The people sagged with sweat, and the mules looked as if they had been lathered with soap. By afternoon the moist heat had

worked its way down into the air shafts and had settled on the valley floor; and when it was hot enough the first of the bottles, for reasons we don't know, began to explode. We only guess that it was the result of some kind of imbalance in the fermentation process, caused by layers of cool air and layers of hot moist air.

After the first several bottles exploded, they dropped Rana, our frog, on a line down one of the air shafts, and he told us that the bottles had become beaded with sweat and that some of them, especially the special bottles of *spumanti*, a bubbly kind of wine that some of the growers experiment with, were boiling inside. Beards of white fungus hung down from the corks like hair on the chin of a goat. Sometimes only the cork would go, and then there would be a hollow pop that could be heard through the wall. When the cork held, however, and the drive of the wine was strong, then the bottle gave, and the sound of the explosion was a sickness and a terror in our hearts.

When they first heard it in the Piazza of the People, Bombolini felt that he knew what it was. Fabio and the Petrarch Brigade, the four or five young boys who made up the Red Flames, must have decided to fight.

Sergeant Traub came across the piazza toward them. "What the hell is that?" he asked.

"From the rock quarry," Pietrosanto said. "Someone is shooting off blasting caps. Some kid is wasting them down there."

The answer satisfied the sergeant then.

"It was a very good answer," Babbaluche said. "I didn't know you could think that fast." A compliment from the cobbler was a very rare thing.

"What? Isn't that what it is?" Pietrosanto asked.

With the setting of the sun and the cooling of the day the explosions stopped and we felt we were safe, at least until the next day. But when the people came in from the terraces to settle for the night the heat of their bodies was enough to make the heat rise once more and cause the first of the bottles to explode.

And once again, to most of the people here at least, the only explanation for what took place is that a miracle occurred. On this night, as if stationed there by God, spread out along the floor of the wine cellar just in front of the false wall, were the families of Constanzia Muricatti and Alfredo del Purgatorio, who were preparing

for their marriage. The families, using sheets and blankets and the canvas covers from the grape carts, had set up two large strange-looking Oriental tents. In one of them the women were all working and sewing on the bridal gown and their own dresses. In the other tent the men were singing and dancing and drinking. The people were very gay and very loud because everyone was very happy about this marriage. It had long been conceded by the Muricatti family that no one would ever marry their Constanzia, and it had long been conceded by the del Purgatorios that it would be a miracle if Alfredo, who was very small and very shy, would ask a woman to share a bed with him.

When the bottle exploded behind the false wall, several of the German soldiers turned around from their cards and looked back into the cellar.

"What's going on back there?" Corporal Heinsick asked. One of the Good Time Boys winked at him.

"The celebration has begun," he said. "They're popping the corks. There will be some action in here tonight."

They sent wine to the soldiers, and a little later, when the music began and the dancing started, we knew we were safe. At the start there was a mandolin and an accordion, and while this worked well as a cover for the sound, Bombolini ordered every musician in the city to play. There were tambourines and one old man with his pipes, there were Capoferro's drums and, finally, the singing and the dancing and the clapping of hands. If you listened with your ear to the wall you might be able to hear a bottle explode now and then, but this was the only way it could be heard.

At nine o'clock that night the dancers, who had worked all day in the vineyards, grew tired and the wine was having its effect and the musicians wanted a rest.

"Play," Bombolini ordered. "Dance," he shouted at the men and the women. "Sing," he told us, "and clap your hands while you do it."

"We can't go on," Tommaso del Purgatorio complained. "We've danced our legs off."

"You'll go on because you have to go on," the mayor told them. "The whole city is depending on you now."

"And look as if you're having fun," Pietrosanto said. "Get that long look off your face."

At eleven o'clock, when they would normally have been asleep for hours, the dancing still continued. It went in shifts now, fresh dancers every fifteen minutes or so, and when the mandolin player stopped, the tambourines beat a little more loudly, and they pounded Capoferro's goatskin drum with heavy wooden spoons. At midnight, while taking a walk in the Piazza of the People, Captain von Prum heard the noise of the gaiety and went down the mountain to see what it was. No one knows how long he might have watched us from the entrance to the Big Room.

"They don't seem to be having very much fun," the captain said.

"They're tired now, but they'll get a second wind, you'll see," Bombolini said. Pietrosanto and some of the others went around the back of one of the tents and gave out new orders.

"Get a smile on your faces," the people were told. "Get some spring into your steps. Start having fun, and don't you dare forget it," Pietrosanto warned them.

"Now, you see," Bombolini said. "Now they're perking up. They can go all night."

And they did.

The dance, Bombolini explained to von Prum in the morning, was a tradition in Santa Vittoria. It might go on for days, he said, through night and through day, until the bride and the groom were exhausted and were too tired to be embarrassed in each other's presence any longer. When the moment was reached they were put to bed together, where they often slept for a day or two at a time, but when they finally woke they were strangers no longer.

"It's not beautiful, perhaps," Bombolini said, "but it is very effective."

"What happens to your work? You can't dance all night and all day and do your work."

"What does it matter about the work if it helps to create a beautiful marriage?" Bombolini said.

"The Italian mind," von Prum said. "You jump from realism to romanticism in the middle of one sentence."

"Oh, it's realistic," Bombolini said. "It keeps up our population. It grows future grape growers." And the German was forced to admit that there was a hard peasant wisdom behind it all.

And then began some of the hardest days and nights ever spent by the people of Santa Vittoria. As long as the city sat stewing in

the heat wave, the party would have to continue, all the time, dancing at eight o'clock in the morning, singing and dancing in the heat of the day, people coming down hot from the terraces to take their places at the drums or in the singing, wine flowing until people were sick of wine, and throats raw from singing and faces frozen from smiling.

"One more night of joy and I shall go mad," Angela Bombolini said. Her thighs and legs cried out in pain from the continual dancing, and she was no different from all of the rest.

On the fourth day of the wedding celebration, because they were forced to do it, the people began to take chances with the bottles. They would sit by the instruments and not move for fear of raising the heat, and when a bottle would go, but only then, they would all get to their feet and hit the tambourines and begin to sing and shout in a tired and mournful way and to shuffle about in the sand.

"The gaiety has died down, the laughter has cooled," von Prum remarked.

"It's coming to that time now," Bombolini told him. "The bed time. We begin with the lullabies, the siren songs, you see. Soon they will sleep."

But it wasn't to be for another two days. The mandolin player wore pruning gloves and he hit the strings with his knuckles. Several members of the del Purgatorio family had already had fights with Muricattis. The sound of the tambourine grew more painful than the crashing of glass behind the walls. If there had been a vote then, it is possible that the people might have surrendered the wine, anything to stop the wedding party.

One night we thought we heard the bombers coming and we were pleased because the sound of the engines and the roar of the explosions would drown the sound of the bottles. Then we felt the first of the wind coming into the mouth of the Big Room, and after that we heard the rain and the thunderclaps and saw the flashes of lightning. And then came a hard, cool wind with a hard, cold rain.

The bottles didn't stop right then. If anything, for the next hours it was worse than ever before, and we feared that all the effort was in vain, that there couldn't be a bottle left to save; but we also knew that the heat was gone, that the autumn was back with us and that in the morning the party would have ended. So we danced then with some wild last source of energy called from the very

bottom urge of desperation, beating the tambourines until they split and strumming the mandolin strings until they broke and striking Capoferro's drum until the goat skin burst.

In the morning we held the wedding of Constanzia Muricatti to Alfredo del Purgatorio. We shivered in the cold in the Piazza of the People, pleased by our goose-pimples, our backs turned to the cold wind that was blowing over Santa Vittoria, the city washed bright and shining by the cold hard rain, and it was the most popular wedding ever held in our city.

They had earned their right to bliss, and it was a wedding that we would never allow to fail. Because this was truly a marriage made in heaven and ordained by God Himself.

"They are very sweet," Captain von Prum said, "and very tired."

"Very tired."

"Now you have no music? A week of music and just when they're married the music ends. It's just the opposite with us."

"Now is the time to sleep and to sleep and to sleep. There's no more need for music. The party is over, you see."

The city still slept when the Germans came, two cars of them, four Germans and four Italians in each car. The cars were unable to make it all of the way up the mountain and they were parked at The Rest and the men proceeded up the rest of the way on foot. The Germans walked ahead and the Italians trailed along behind them. The Germans were all officers and looked as if they are a great deal of meat. The Italians were all civilians, dressed in little thin dark suits stained with wine and pasta and they looked as if they lived on field greens and pebbles. Word had gone up the Corso Cavour to Captain von Prum, and by the time they arrived at the Fat Gate the captain had already gotten dressed and gone down the steep street to meet them. Colonel Scheer made no response to his greeting.

"They say the wine is here," the colonel said. He pointed to the Italians.

"With all respect, sir, they can say what they wish, but I am forced to stand on my statement," Captain von Prum said.

"It cost them a lot of teeth to say that and to stand by it," Colonel Scheer said, and he went across to one of the Italians and he forced open the man's mouth. His gums were torn and his teeth were gone.

"This is our wine."

Scheer raised his dark hard fist and struck the mayor in the mouth. "Where is the wine?"

When Bombolini held out his hands again the colonel hit his face once more, as hard as the first time, breaking his nose and breaking one tooth loose from the bridge of his mouth and causing him to fall on the stone floor of the wine cellar. The first blow had caused a lump the size of a pigeon's egg to form below Bombolini's eye, and the colonel touched it with the sandy tip of his boot.

"Now if you want to lose your eyesight to protect something that will be found out in the next few hours, I will oblige you with my boot," the colonel said. He turned on von Prum. "Don't turn away," he said. "Is this too crude for someone with such fine blood as yours?"

"It isn't that," the captain said. "It's the failure of what I wanted to do here. We wanted to rule without violence."

"Well your rule has been shit," Colonel Scheer said. "What do you think of that? Do you think this is ineffective?" He slammed his hard fist into the palm of his other hand. "You would be surprised how well it works."

"It wasn't the way I wanted to do it."

Scheer was angered by the statement. "You may think you're different, but you're one of us," the colonel said. "You are a German. Don't you ever forget how many fists have been used on how many faces by men who haven't been afraid to use them to make fine people like yourself. We fought for that, and I am not ashamed of it. Those who can use the fist have a right to use the fist, they have a responsibility to use the fist if the fist can help the Fatherland. Who do you think you are?"

The colonel's anger and harshness and scorn were very difficult for the captain to take. He lowered his eyes at last and he looked at the floor not conscious of the mayor's body lying on it.

"Get him up and hit him," Colonel Scheer said. Several of the soldiers lifted Bombolini to his feet.

"It isn't the hitting, Colonel, I can hit." He surprised them by pulling back his arm and smashing his fist into Bombolini's face. He hit him on the swollen lump and it split on the impact like a grape between the fingers, and blood splattered from it.

"You have been baptized," Scheer said. "Now you are one of us." He was easier toward the captain now.

"I believe you now," Captain von Prum said. "The wine is here. I am humiliated. Now I ask one thing of you."

"Will you hit him again, good and hard? Would you knock an eye out?"

"Yes," von Prum said.

"Then ask."

"I want a chance to restore my honor in my own way," the captain said. "I want to find the wine and bring it to you by myself."

"And if you don't?"

"I'll find it."

"I give you five days."

Von Prum was overjoyed. "You will have your wine," he said, "and if you don't I shall resign my commission."

Scheer laughed at him then. "That's generous of you," the colonel said. "If you don't, you'll find your ass on the eastern front—excuse my peasant manners, von Knoblesdorf. What kind of war do you think we're running here?"

When they were gone Captain von Prum went back to the wine cellar. Some women were already washing the mayor's wounds.

"I had to do that, do you understand?" the captain said. "It was required of me, a matter of form."

Bombolini was facing away from the captain toward the wall. He was in great pain, and yet he was pleased with himself. He had discovered that he wasn't afraid of the punishment and that he would say nothing despite the pain of it.

"It was unworthy of you," Bombolini said.

"It was a matter of form," the captain said.

The mayor turned toward the captain. His face was badly battered and, as von Prum later wrote, it was almost disgusting to have to contemplate.

"After all of the things you told me," Bombolini said.

"I still believe them," the captain said. "Now the wine will be found. I try to force no answer from you. I ask you as a reasonable man to save both of us effort and pain. Now that they are gone, where is the wine?"

Bombolini smiled at him, although it was painful to smile and the air that touched the broken tooth caused him to gasp aloud.

"There is no wine."

He was confident, and his confidence passed to the men. Now that he had no doubt that the wine was in Santa Vittoria he had no doubt that it could be found.

"It is a matter of reason and logic and science," Captain von Prum told them. "I want no force and no violence."

"Oh, we'll find it all right," Corporal Heinsick said. "If *they* hid it, sir, then *we'll* find it."

This was the true logic: that if the Italians had been smart enough to hide the wine, then it stood to reason that the Germans must be smart enough to find it.

The first "logical anticipation" was the Roman wine cellar, as the most obvious and convenient place to put the wine, and it was the first to be eliminated. Sergeant Traub told the other soldiers, "Even the wops are too smart to put their wine down there." And they went on to the second anticipation, which was the Fat Wall around the city. It was a possibility that had to be checked, that the wall or some stretch of it had been hollowed out and was being used as a massive container for the wine. In the morning they began going over the wall almost brick by brick, striking the sides with their trench knives and bayonets, listening for that hollow sound that would tell them that the brick front was false and the wine was hiding behind it. By the middle of the morning they were still not halfway around the city. It is very hard to explain to someone who was not there on that day, how ironic the tapping on the bricks was to the people of the city.

When they were through with the Fat Wall they began to investigate the possibility that the wine was in some fashion buried in the very bowels of the city, and that there must be some old storage place, probably built in ancient days as protection against marauding armies, that could be reached by old stairways and trap doors in the floors and cellars of the old houses or through the church or the Palace of the People. Late on the first afternoon they began a step-by-step, door-by-door, systematic, logical examination of every house in Santa Vittoria.

They began in High Town and from there they started down the lanes to the Piazza of the People, down from the Goats to the Turtles and, if needed, to the Frogs in Old Town, where the wine would almost surely lie.

They picked up the beds and the mattresses on the floors, and

the rush mats, and they tapped the stone floors and the earth floors, and they tapped the tile floors (of those fortunate enough to have tiles) with metal rods and wooden sticks and stone hammers.

The search of the houses took longer than they had thought, and although time was on their side time also was fleeing from them. *Von Prum began to urge them to go a little faster and a little faster*, and the stop for lunch was only ten minutes long and there was no rest, and then they ate their supper while they worked. At night we still went down the mountain and, since the evenings were becoming cool, it was comfortable in the Roman cellar. The Good Time Boys played cards by themselves, and if we were quiet we could hear the sound of the stone hammers all the way down the mountain. Young men went up and watched the Germans' progress and told us where they were—now in Francucci's old house, now in del Purgatorio's, now in Vittorini's, tapping, tapping, tapping, until the lights went out in the Roman cellar.

We woke to the same sound. They were at it before the sun was up.

Bombolini never heard the tapping on the stones, because all of those days he slept. At times he awoke, but then he would sleep again. They had carried him up to his old bed in his old home above the wineshop, so that Angela Bombolini could take care of him. On the third day he was able to sit up and take some soup, and they made him a chicken soup in which an entire chicken had been used, a very great thing here. When he finally awoke for good, although he could not see because of the swelling of his face, everything seemed clear to him. He felt that he could see things as if they were written on glass through which a light was shining, and all of the answers were simple and clear. It was he, for example, who knew at once what must be done with The Band.

As the Germans neared the houses in Old Town, Pietrosanto came to him in terror.

"*So you didn't kill them after all,*" *Bombolini said.*

Pietro hung his head in shame. "I tried to. I had my rifle ready, and then I looked into those big stupid ox eyes of Francucci's, and I couldn't make my finger pull the trigger."

"I'm ashamed of you. What would The Master say about you?"

"Yes, it is shameful." Instead of killing them, he had hidden them in the cellar of one of the oldest houses by the wall at the bottom of Old Town.

"As soon as it is evening take them out of the cellar and up the back lane around Old Town and put them in the cellar of Copa's old house. They'll be safe there. The Germans will never come back."

Because of the systematic manner of the German search we always knew where they were going and where they had been. A criminal might have stayed one house ahead of them or one house behind and been perfectly safe all of the while.

And when Fabio came down from the mountains, Bombolini knew what to do with him.

"This act must be avenged," Fabio said. "The time for crawling has passed, the time to act is at hand."

Fabio had grown a beard in the mountains, and since it was the same color as his hair, so deeply black that when the light struck it it was blue, the beard against the long whiteness of his face made him look more like a martyr than before.

"It isn't the blows to you as an individual," Fabio said.

"No, of course not," Bombolini said. He allowed his fingers to touch the swelling of his face and his tongue tipped his broken tooth.

"It is to you as our leader," Fabio said. "This is what hurts. These blows to you wound us, the damage to you demeans us. When they strike you, they wound me. I am the one who is insulted."

He then went on to outline the attack he planned on the Germans, on von Prum and on the drunken soldiers in the cellar.

"I agree with you, Fabio," Bombolini said. "The time to act has come."

A plan was made at once. The Red Flames would come down out of the mountains that night and gather in back of Copa's house, just outside the Fat Wall. At two o'clock, at the sound of a goat, Pietrosanto and the other soldiers would drop ropes and pull them up over the wall into Santa Vittoria where they would join forces and prepare the assault on the enemy. Fabio was moved to tears.

"You don't know how long I have waited for this," Fabio said. "The hour has come when we will pay acts of dishonor with deeds of honor."

It is embarrassing, after what happened, to write that Fabio then kissed him on both swollen cheeks.

And it was Bombolini who began the silent evacuation of the city. They got Padre Polenta's parish list and began to write down the names of all the people they felt could not keep their silence if

the Germans turned to violence. These people would be allowed to work in the terraces but never to come up into the city. In the next two days they sent down almost all the women of the city and they sent the old men and people like Fungo the idiot, and Rana because he was wild and Capoferro because he was crazy and Robèrto Abruzzi because they were afraid he might cry out something in English if they tore out a finger-nail. And because the Germans were the way they were, because they didn't really know what we were doing, they never noticed the women gone, the children vanished, the old out of sight.

Because of what happened to Bombolini there was a good feeling in the city about the prospects of physical violence.

"If he can do it, if *Bombolini* can take it, then I can take it," the men said.

Only Tufa, who said nothing aloud to all this, had no faith.

"They don't know," he told Caterina Malatesta. "They don't know what's going to happen to them."

"Then why don't you tell them?"

"It won't do any good. They feel good now, and why should I spoil that? They may not turn to it after all, so why should I frighten everyone?"

He told Caterina then what they would do. The soldiers in the city now wouldn't do it. They would send for the professionals, for the Gestapo or the SS secret police.

"Then they all break," Tufa said. "No man can stand it. They do things to men that it is impossible for men to believe even when it is happening to them."

"But Bombolini stood it," Caterina said.

"No, no, no, no. He stood *nothing*. After five minutes with the SS he will beg them to break his jaw or put out his eye if only they will stop doing what they are doing to him."

In the end she persuaded him to go to Bombolini and tell him. And what the mayor heard saddened him, because he had been feeling confident about himself and about his people.

"But it takes time to break a man, isn't that true?" Bombolini said.

"Sometimes it takes two minutes and sometimes ten and sometimes an hour, although they don't generally live after that."

"I was nothing then?" He was very sad.

"You were brave, Bombolini, and you were nothing. This goes beyond bravery. They *all* break sooner or later."

"So there is no hope."

"There is no hope."

And then Tufa was astonished and even angered to see that Bombolini, to the best of his ability, was trying to smile at him.

"I have some people no one in the world can break," Bombolini said.

"They all break," Tufa said. He almost shouted at the mayor. "You must believe me and be prepared for it."

But Bombolini only shook his head and continued smiling, like the statues of some saints one sometimes sees, gentle and all knowing and at peace with the world.

"I have some men who won't break," Bombolini said, and fell back to sleep then.

It was almost dawn when Pietrosanto went down into the Piazza of the People and reported to Bombolini what they had done with Fabio and the rest of the Red Flames. They had led them to the cellar, the same one in which The Band was hidden, and they had bound and gagged them and put them in the darkness beneath the house.

"How did they take it?" Bombolini asked.

"They vowed to kill first you and then the Germans," Pietrosanto said.

"Did you explain that it was for the good of the wine, for the good of the people of Santa Vittoria?"

"I told them."

"And how did they react?"

"The same as a pig I once told that he'd be more help to everyone as beacon," Pietro said. "He didn't want to understand me."

Bombolini smiled his painful smile. "Well, I feel safer now," he said. "This was no time for valor."

"What gets into people like Fabio?" the head of the army said. "He knows this is no place for honor."

"In some ways Fabio wasn't raised right," Bombolini said.

They finished the search of the houses on the evening of the third day with the very last house pressed up against the side of the Fat Wall in Old Town. It was clear to all of them that nothing could be

hidden around or beneath that hovel, but Private Zopf and Private Goettke searched it so that the record was perfect and every house in the city had been searched from top to bottom.

"So much for *that*," von Prum said. "Now the noose grows truly tight."

They had a good meal that night for the first time in several days, but the captain found that even though he was hungry he could not eat and although he was tired he could not sleep. He allowed himself a nap, and it was while lying on his bed, in between the worlds of sleep and waking, that he received the first of his inspirations. He got up very swiftly, moving directly and silently as if he were stalking an animal that would break and run from him if he made an unexpected sound or move.

"Traub." He woke the sergeant. "The bell tower. Where else but the bell tower?"

They crossed the piazza, moving swiftly and silently.

"The entire middle part of the tower could be filled with wine," the captain said. He spoke in a low voice, as if the wine could hear him or someone could do something about it if he was heard.

Sergeant Traub pounded on the door and when the priest was slow in answering the knocks, since light was not permitted in the tower, Captain von Prum told the sergeant to shoot the lock off the door. He fired three shots in all, and then Padre Polenta opened the door.

"We should have looked here first," the captain told the priest.

Traub was already running up the steep stone stairs, but when he could see well enough to realize that he could see all the way up the tower to where the bells hung and all the way down to where the captain stood, he came slowly back and then they went out into the Piazza of the People and back across it to Constanzia's house.

"It was worth the effort," the captain said. They got out the map of the city and with a good deal of satisfaction they eliminated the campanile from the list of possible hiding places.

Sometime during that same night, although they had already searched Santa Maria of the Burning Oven once before, the captain woke Sergeant Traub and sent him down the Corso Cavour to the wine cellar to get the other men. It was something that Bombolini had said, about the church having been built on the ruins of an

even more ancient church, a Roman temple which, in turn, had been built on an Etruscan foundation. It stood to reason, von Prum told the sergeant, that there was an ancient cellar, down below somewhere, which they had overlooked. They searched the rest of the night until the dawn.

At dawn he thought of the water tower. It had not even been on the list. It was almost painful to watch the things they did that morning. It made people tired watching the work they did. Ever since the people here have been willing to admit that a German is a person capable of a great amount of painful work. It was Private Zopf who made the climb and he regretted all the stories he had told about the days he had spent traveling with a circus through Bavaria and how at one time he had had a bright future as a high wire walker. He went up the narrow ladder of the water tower in surprisingly swift time, but at the iron catwalk he stopped.

"Go ahead," von Prum shouted. "What are you waiting for?"

"I'm tired, sir. I've run out of strength, sir," Private Zopf called down. "I haven't slept in two nights."

"Take a rest, but hurry." the captain ordered.

Eventually the soldier worked his way onto the catwalk and then up onto the roof, where he found a small door. By a great effort, since the door handle had turned to rust years before, he opened it and looked down into the tower.

"It's only water, sir," the soldier shouted down.

"Have you tasted it?"

"No, sir. But I know it isn't wine. It doesn't smell like wine."

"Are there any bottles in the water? There must be bottles in the water. Thousands of bottles in the water."

In the end Zopf dropped through the doorway and suspended himself over the water by his feet. It was a dangerous thing to do. If he had slipped he might have drowned in the tank.

They didn't wait for Zopf to come down but went instead, at a very fast pace, back up to the Piazza of the People. The sun was up by then and another day was well underway.

"Allow me to ask him," Corporal Heinsick said to Traub.

"He doesn't want to hear things like that," Traub said. But in the end he allowed the corporal to speak to the captain.

"Let me have one of them, sir," Heinsick said to Captain von Prum. "Let me take charge of one of these people."

The captain looked at the corporal as if seeing him for the first time.

"What do you mean, *have* one?" the captain said.

"We've got to start hitting someone soon, sir," Heinsick said. "I'll take some woman or some child. It won't take much, sir. It will be all over this morning. I'll just stick someone's hand in the fire, sir."

Von Prum almost struck the corporal. As it was, he shouted at him. He told him that they didn't do things that way, that the Russians did things that way and barbarians acted that way, but that Germans didn't act that way because Germans didn't need to act that way.

"We don't use muscle, we use the mind," Captain von Prum said. "It's the difference between us and all of them."

Sometime in the morning Sergeant Traub thought of the priest and he went to Captain von Prum.

"A priest *can't* tell a lie, sir," the sergeant said. "Ask him where the wine is, and he has to tell you. Otherwise he goes to hell when he dies."

"In Germany the priests don't lie," the captain said, "but in Italy the priests lie. But go get him."

Polenta was frightened when they came to get him because he is afraid of physical punishment and he feared what they might do to him.

"A lie is a sin," von Prum said to the priest, "and as a priest of the Holy Roman Catholic Church you are forbidden to lie. Do you know where the wine is?"

Polenta stared at them with amazement.

"Notice, Father," von Prum said, "I don't ask you to reveal where the wine is. I merely ask do you *know* where it is?"

Polenta shook his head and waved his hand in the direction of the Cooperative Wine Cellar.

"There is the wine," he said.

They got a Holy Bible after that, and they told the priest to put one hand upon his heart and to lay the other hand upon the sacred book.

"I ask you once again, as a man of God, as God's representative here on earth, who can knowingly commit no sin in the face of God: Do you know of the wine?"

"No," Polenta said. "As a man of God I give you my sacred word. I will do better."

He had brought along a cross as a shield to hide behind, and he held it up and made the sign of the cross, and he also blessed them with the cross.

"This cross is made from the wood of the True Cross," Padre Polenta said. "I paid five hundred lire for it and it ought to be sacred. Upon this cross, as God is my witness, I tell you there is no other wine."

Von Prum struck the cross from the priest's hand.

"May you burn in hell for that lie," he said.

But it bothered the men after that morning. It bothered them that the captain had struck the cross, and it bothered them the way that Polenta had answered the questions.

"They can lie," Sergeant Traub told them. "Priests are only men wearing skirts."

"I don't know. I don't understand it," Heinsick said. "He stood right there and told us, a man of the cloth, 'I tell you there is no other wine.' " Heinsick shook his head.

"How could he hold the sacred cross like that, the True Cross, and lie?" Private Goettke said.

"They can lie, but not when they hold the cross," Private Impossible said. "If you lie on the cross or the good book, God sends a sign so everyone can see. Your tongue turns black. The words strangle in your throat. It's like telling a lie in the confession box. They always know."

"It is impossible to deceive the cross," Heinsick said. "Do you know what I'm thinking? I think there is no wine here."

Zopf had come down from the tower, and because he had done the dangerous thing he was allowed to say things the others wouldn't say.

"I think someone is going out of his mind," the soldier said, and several of them, when Traub was not looking, nodded their heads.

It was the fifth day, and on that afternoon, as they expected and as we expected, a messenger came from Montefalcone.

From the office of Colonel Scheer was this note:

The hunting season is over.

Bring in your pelts or bring in yourself by sundown tomorrow evening.

Von Prum left Constanzia's house and crossed the piazza to the wineshop and without waiting or announcing himself in any way he ran up the stairs to Bombolini's room, where he found him in bed, with Roberto seated by his side. He was very excited and he spoke swiftly.

"Where is the wine? The game is over," the captain said. "I did my best. I have played fairly. My hands are clean."

He appeared to be relieved.

"I want you to remember that I gave you your chance until the end, Captain Bombolini." It was the first time he had ever honored the mayor with his title. "Tomorrow the new team comes."

CHAPTER VII

THE RAT IN THE THROAT

WHEN we saw them come up the mountain from Montefalcone early the next morning, there was almost a sigh of relief from the men. When one has steeled oneself for an ordeal it is sometimes best that the ordeal take place at the proper time.

The men were passing around the *grappa* bottle, drinking deeply from it and encouraging the others while being encouraged, when Bombolini surprised them by telling them each to hide in a house that faced on the piazza from which they could watch the piazza but not be seen from it. They were to stay there until he waved them to come out. Some of them were disappointed and even angry.

"I thought we were to be courageous?" one of them said. "Now you have us running and hiding."

"I'm ready," another said. "I'm ready for the sons of bitches. I'll take everything they can hand out."

But he sent them away and they went, and so it was that when they came, the four of them, von Prum and Traub and two young soldiers from the SS, Bombolini was alone in the Piazza of the People, this time without even Vittorini to stand behind him in his uniform. They came on the motorcycle and they were followed by a small compact truck that held the SS men's equipment.

"So. You put everyone away this morning," Captain von Prum said. Bombolini nodded.

"Or did they run away?"

"No, sir. I hid them."

"The same as your wine."

"No, Captain."

"We'll soon find out." The captain began to walk across the piazza toward the Palace of the People and so Bombolini went along with him. "I'm going to use your place, because it's bigger."

They stood in the doorway of the Palace and examined the large dark room, and Bombolini found himself wishing that he had kept it more neatly because he could see von Prum's disapproving face.

"And because it's very filthy," Captain von Prum said. "They bleed and vomit, and all of the rest of it. I'm told that every orifice comes into use."

Bombolini understood that this would be his one opportunity to do what he had to do, and although he could see that the captain didn't wish to hear him he seized the chance.

"Which is why I have this one thing to ask of you," Bombolini said. "I don't want to have to be responsible for picking any man," the mayor said.

"I'll do the picking if you wish," von Prum said.

"I told the people not to come into the piazza until after you had come," Bombolini said.

"And? What about it?"

"The first one who comes into the piazza is the one who will have to taste it first."

The captain was interested, Bombolini could see that.

"In that way I don't have to have his blood on my head. And you don't have to be the one to choose, Captain. God will decide. Or fate. I don't know if you believe. The first who walks into the piazza is the one fate has determined to choose."

"I would have said the devil, not God," von Prum said. But he was smiling. The idea appealed to him. Sergeant Traub had come into the room then, and he was followed by the two SS men. Bombolini was surprised to see how young they were. They were boys. The captain turned back to Bombolini.

"So you can control who faces these men," von Prum said. "You have all of your brave boys ready to walk into the piazza by fate."

"No, it isn't true. Have *them*"—he nodded toward the SS men—"try me if you don't believe me. I have no one ready for you."

Von Prum then explained the situation to the younger of the two soldiers who, despite his age, appeared to be the leader.

"It makes no difference," the soldier said. "It makes no difference *at all. They all talk.*"

He was very casual and totally confident in his work, and his voice had the unconcerned quality that those who possess the truth often use.

"No. It doesn't matter," the second soldier said. "A matter of time sometimes, a few minutes this way or that. But they break."

"Yes, they all talk."

"We never fail," the older one said.

"No, we have never failed."

Captain von Prum turned back to Bombolini.

"All right. It's in the hands of God," the German said.

"My hands are clean," Bombolini said.

"And mine," von Prum said. But he was smiling. "God has the dirty hands now." Both of the soldiers gave the captain a questioning look and he decided that he had gone far enough in that direction.

They were very young and very clean. When they laughed, which was often, their teeth were even and clean and strong. If one word alone could be used to describe them, it would be clean, and after that young, and after that strong. They weren't dressed the same as the other soldiers. Their uniforms were black with white piping, and the darkness of their dress made their skins seem fairer and their eyes bluer and their blondness more striking.

It was impossible for even Bombolini not to admire the neatness and precision of their work. In a very short time they had cleared out the truck and set up their equipment. The last piece was a wooden table, a narrow, thin plank of wood not much wider than an ironing board, which folded into sections, very much like a portable operating table. From the sides of the table hung three black leather straps, very wide and strong and three large, strong metal buckles.

At one side of this table was a battery-operated portable generator to which they began attaching coils of wire with little metal clips that had rows of teeth like ferrets. On the other side was a smaller table on which rested pincers and pliers, hooks, rubber hoses, a large funnel, surgical scissors, metal clamps, an iron grappling hook, a gouge, a hammer with a long thin head and claws like the horns of a ram, handcuffs, a blowtorch.

"You're young but you know your business, you interrogators," Captain von Prum said.

"We like to think of ourselves as a truth squad," the youngest of them said. "Going about the land uncovering truth."

Again they smiled at one another. There was nothing solemn about them.

"Now hand me the gloves, Hans," the younger one said. They had already put on black rubber aprons over their black uniforms, and now Hans handed the younger, who was named Otto, black rubber gloves. "Sometimes it gets a bit messy, you see," Otto said. "You haven't even seen this before?" he asked von Prum. The captain shook his head.

"After a while you get used to it," Otto said.

"We'll do five," Captain von Prum said. He turned to Bombolini. "Did you hear that?"

"If one will do . . ." the mayor began.

"Five," von Prum said. "I want five." His voice was hard and cold.

"I will send you such cowards," Bombolini suddenly said, surprising even himself, "men who will tell you such lies, who will beg you and try to please you in so many ways, you won't know what is true and what is false."

"The more they talk the more truth they reveal, even when they're lying," Otto said.

Traub came up from the piazza on to the terrace and called in through the door.

"Here comes one," he said. "We've got one coming across the piazza now."

They went to the door of the Palace of the People and they looked out at what fate had delivered to them. He had come down the steep hill from High Town and paused for a moment at the edge of the piazza. When he saw the Germans he made no effort to avoid them, but instead went directly toward them.

"A martyr. It's one of the martyr types," Hans said.

They watched the man say something to Corporal Heinsick and then he began to bring the man across the piazza to where they were.

"You lied to us," one of the Germans said to Bombolini. "You sent us a hero."

At the stairs up to the terrace Heinsick stopped and then pushed the prisoner up the stairs.

"He says he's glad to see us," Heinsick said. "I told him *we* were glad to see *him*."

It was Giuliano Copa, the former mayor of Santa Vittoria. When he saw Captain von Prum he made a Fascist salute. "Long live the Duce. Long live Hitler," he said. "What took you so long?"

"Oh, God. *This* kind," Hans said. "The loyal, true Fascist." He turned to the others. "He was really for us all along, you see. *Now* he will tell you."

They laughed at Copa. His eyes grew large with suspicion and with fear. Bombolini made an effort to stay in the shadows of the room. When he saw the interrogation tools Copa began to shout.

"I am a loyal Fascist," Copa shouted. "I am a member in good

standing of the party. There has been a mistake—"

"Quiet," Hans suddenly shouted at him. It was easy to understand then how Hans had been entrusted with the kind of work he did. "There is always a mistake," he said to the rest. "Take off your clothes," he shouted at Copa.

"I don't understand," Copa said.

He was brave. He was still in command of his voice, and his body gave no outward sign of fear.

"You don't understand the words 'Take off your clothes?'" Otto said. "Does this mean anything to you?" He seized the top of Copa's shirt and in one sudden motion ripped it from his body.

When Copa was naked they placed him on the narrow wooden table and they strapped him to it with the leather straps.

They moved the magneto closer to the table, and when Otto tested it for the last time the little clips that would be attached to Copa jumped about like little frightened toads.

"You never let the client feel human, do you understand," Hans said. "You always look at them as if they were roaches, and when they talk to you you never understand them. In this way they feel all alone."

"Like turds. Most men feel like turds deep down, you know. Like something disgusting that was dropped into the world," Otto said. "Those aren't my words. The psychologists, you understand."

"Did you hear that?" von Prum said. "The psychologists. It's all been figured out."

Otto was leaning over Copa then.

"We don't want to do this to your body. It will be more terrible than you know. At the moment it begins you will want to die. You will beg us to let you die. Sometimes they do die. He looked up at Captain von Prum. "The heart explodes in the chest. The brain is shattered; shocked to pieces, you understand."

"Now, you see, we'll see if he is telling the truth," Otto said. He looked up at the captain again with an embarrassed smile. "What was it we wanted to know."

"About the wine. Where is the rest of the wine?"

He asked and Copa said that he didn't understand the question and that he didn't know what they were asking him.

"Now?" Hans said. "Now," Otto said.

He made a movement with his finger on the magneto, a very

slight movement with the brass handle, and at that same moment Copa came flying up from the wooden table against the leather straps as if the straps must cut him apart and during this same instant he opened his mouth and after what seemed a long passing of time, a little lifetime of time, he released from the depths of himself a scream so terrible in its fear and agony and horror and worst of all, disbelief, that both von Prum and Bombolini found themselves shouting aloud in some kind of cry of recognition of the human animal.

After Copa, the same treatment was given increasingly harshly to Mazzola, Francucci, Fabio, and Cavalcanti. All withstood the torture and revealed nothing about the wine. The SS men then told von Prum that there was no wine concealed in the village and left the village. But von Prum was still convinced that there was hidden wine somewhere, regardless of the SS conviction in their methods of extracting the truth.

It will be difficult for someone who is not from here to understand that despite what had taken place the mood of the people was forgiving. The hand of death had rested on the city and then it had been taken away. But more than that, it was because the harvest was closing upon us and it was a good harvest, a rich harvest fat with promise, and the harvest, of course, is life here. There isn't the luxury of time to hate during harvest.

When the grapes call nothing else is heard. We cared only for that moment when Old Vines, listening to the vines, testing the grapes by mouth, looking at the sun and sky, talking with the gods of the grapes that he talked to, would announce that the hour had come, that the time was ripe, that Polenta should go down to the terraces and sprinkle cool holy water on the plump warm clusters and that God should keep His Good Eye on all of us while the harvest got underway.

It was for this reason that, when Captain von Prum went down the mountain with Sergeant Traub to Montefalcone, some of the people actually waved to them as they went.

"I don't understand them," Sergeant Traub said. "I swear to God, sir, I don't understand these people."

"It's very simple," Captain von Prum said. "They think they've won something. They think they can afford to be pleasant."

"They shouldn't act this way after what happened to them," Traub said.

"It is a matter of values," von Prum said. "They are deficient in values. I've come to despise them."

Things had been changing in Montefalcone. Many of the units stationed in the city had packed up and pulled back to the higher mountains in the north, where it was said the Germans would attempt to establish a winter line that would be easy to defend and expensive to take. Captain von Prum reported to Colonel Scheer, and the colonel was pleased to see him. He pointed to a report on the top of his desk.

"They clear you," Colonel Scheer said. "They vindicate you."

"But that's what I come to see you about," von Prum said. "I am still convinced the wine is in the city."

"Don't be a fool," Colonel Scheer said. "The SS says there is no wine, so there is no wine. The gods have spoken, the file is closed, von Prum is exonerated."

"But if it's there, I want to find it," von Prum said.

"Why?" The colonel was sarcastic then. "Your honor? Duty? A matter of principle, perhaps. In the name of God, we don't care about the wine just so we aren't held responsible for it."

"Because," Captain von Prum said, "if the wine is there they're laughing at me. Bombolini is laughing at me."

Colonel Scheer looked at his junior officer. Such fine points of behavior were beyond his personal experience.

"And so, as we say where I come from, you have a rat in your throat."

"If you wish to put it that way."

"And what would you do with the wine if you found it? It's too late for us to do anything with it, you know. We couldn't ship it now. We couldn't steal it if we wanted to."

Von Prum's voice was loud and for the moment he lost the poise which the colonel had admired in him.

"I'd smash it," the captain said. "If we couldn't take it from there I'd break it. I would break every bottle it was in my power to break."

Scheer smiled at him then. "Yes, you have a rat in your throat."

He got up from his seat and went to the window that looks down into the Piazza Frossimbone, where only a short time before the people of Santa Vittoria had dragged themselves along with their

wine on their backs in public display. It was we who had the rats in our throats then.

"Then," the colonel said, "what you have to do—and never say that I suggested it—is to take hostage." He turned back to the captain. "Have you thought of it?"

The captain shook his head.

"More important, can you carry it out?"

"Yes," von Prum said.

Once again Scheer smiled at him. "You've changed," he said. "Yes, you have the rat. Do you know something? I think you're becoming a proper German."

The thing of a hostage, Colonel Scheer told him, was that the people had time to think about what was taking place.

"You put his life on the conscience of the people. There's a very simple choice for them. If they tell you what you want to know, the hostage lives. If they don't, he dies and by their silence they have killed him."

There were other fine points to consider. The hostage, the colonel explained, must be put on view, in the public piazza, so that he is never out of their minds. When they go to work they see him and when they come back he is there. With good fortune, at night they can hear him moan or cry out in his sleep.

Von Prum was openly excited by then, and he asked the colonel for written permission to choose a hostage in Santa Vittoria.

"My very dear von Knoblesdorf," Scheer said. "It's your honor you're trying to salvage, not mine. At this stage I have butter in my mouth, not a rat." He pointed about the office where the files were already being packed. "We're leaving, you know."

"Does it work?"

"Almost every time," Colonel Scheer said. "Of course it isn't as simple as it sounds. In case we lose the war, just in case, understand." *He began to smile again. "You might have to justify what you have* done."

"I understand that, sir. It's a risk I'm prepared to run."

And now Scheer was smiling as broadly as he had all of that morning. "And then there's always Him up there, eh? You don't want to forget Him."

"I already have."

He wished to go right then, but the colonel held him and they

talked of the progress of the war although von Prum could barely hear him. That war was another war, which no longer belonged to him; his own was being waged within himself and with some people on a mountain.

At the door the colonel cautioned him again. "Try and get someone with a good family life," he said. "You will find that it is especially difficult for children to stand and watch their fathers die before them, all for the sake of a few words."

He held him again at the bottom of the steps. "You didn't say it, Captain."

Von Prum came to attention. "Heil Hitler," he said.

"Heil Hitler," Scheer said. "And von Prum?"

"Yes."

"God go with you."

There was never any doubt in the beginning who the hostage would be. When they reached Santa Vittoria it was dark and the captain found that he was tired, but as they passed the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle he felt revived again and the blood was rushing through his brain. He felt he could see him there, bound to the Pissing Turtle, his fat stomach showing through the front of his shirt, the eyes of the people staring at him, weeping for him and finally, sometime before the dawn, when no one else was about, asking for the captain and whispering to him: "Captain, I have something I want to tell you."

He went into his room and he wrote in his log and his journal, and the name of Italo Bombolini figures often in those pages. After he wrote he slept, and during that time something must have happened to his dream. Sometime before sunrise he woke and got up, and then he woke Sergeant Traub.

"Get up now and go and get me the one called Tufa," Captain von Prum said. "Get him out of his bed and bring him here."

You always have wanted to be a martyr," the captain told Tufa. "I can see it in your eyes. And now I'm going to give you your chance. What do you say to that?"

"Thank you," Tufa said.

They tied him to the tail of the dolphin that swims down one side of the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle soon after the sun was up, to allow the people to see him there on their way to work. There was

no need to announce the reason for his being there. As we say here, good is sometimes not noticed when it goes, but evil is always seen when it arrives. At first the people didn't want to leave the piazza, but it was Tufa who ordered them to go down to the grapes, and in a way the people were gratified, because the harvest was upon them and the pull of the grapes grows very strong.

"Don't you worry, Tufa," they told him. "We'll come and get you in the evening when it's dark. We'll cut you loose."

But those who knew Tufa knew he would never allow it. The cost for harming Germans had gone up along with all prices in a war. The fee was now twenty-five Italians for every German harmed. Near San Rocco, in a country village, when a farmer slapped the face of an officer his entire family and others in the village were put to death and the farmer was forced to live.

"Have you ever seen this done before?" Tufa asked Sergeant Traub.

"Oh yes, in Russia, in Poland. It's effective. They don't let you die, you know. There is always someone who wants to save you. It's very hard to become a martyr these days."

It is not easy even now for us to believe that the city slept that night. But Bombolini went home and slept, and they put a straw pallet down on the cobblestones and Tufa slept, and the people looking from the windows around the piazza began to go to sleep because the people had worked hard that day and they know that even when death is in the house life goes on and that beyond Tufa there were the grapes, brimming with life, to be considered as well the next day. The soldiers who were seated around Tufa had had their wine and they too were tired. The water pouring from the turtle was as steady and gentle as the wind that whispered in every part of the piazza, and it lulled them. Across the piazza the captain was awake and, although he had gotten ready to go to bed, he got up again and, for a reason he could not explain, dressed himself again. His intuition was good, because at the time that he was dressing, Caterina Malatesta was coming down from High Town.

She carried her shoes in her hand so she would make no noise, and she stayed in the shadows of the houses. There was a thin moon that night and there was light on one side of the piazza, but the far side was buried in shadow. The old women and old men who stay at the windows because for them to sleep is to die, must have seen her

moving along in the darkness, but they said nothing. Whatever happens doesn't belong to them any more; they only watch and wait.

When Caterina was opposite the piazza from the fountain she stopped and attempted to see Tufa, but it was too dark for that. There was no movement of any kind then, only the water, and the usual night sounds, a child crying out for its mother, the heavy breathing of oxen up the side lanes and the deep-throated tunk of their bells as they shifted their positions.

The door to Constanzia's house was in shadow, so even the old people didn't see her then. At the door she put on her shoes—they were shoes from the city, with heels, and not made for here—and when she was ready she scratched on the wood of the door with her fingernails.

In the manner of such things, although the captain had not heard the sound before, he knew at once what it meant. He was pleased that Traub was not in the outer room, where he often slept, but was in the piazza guarding the hostage. Before he went to let her in, he straightened up the room and lit a second tallow candle which he put before a mirror so that it gave off a warm good light and then he went to the door.

He realized that ever since he had first heard the word "hostage" in Montefalcone, without ever admitting it he had been preparing for this moment. But even so, when he did open the door to her, he was unprepared for her beauty. In the books and stories it says that men are made breathless by the great beauty of a woman, and in this case it was as the books say. Her beauty was a force in the room that he felt; he was overpowered by it. She had spent that day in the classic way of great beauties, in warm baths, in oils, she had washed her hair and brushed it so often that the light reflected from it and she had dressed in the kind of dress no other woman has ever worn here because no other woman would know how to buy one or how to wear one, or would ever have the money to own one.

When he had dreamed of this moment he had dreamed that he would surrender, but that in surrendering, as it should be with any good soldier, the price would come high. He knew that what he was doing would in some way, perhaps a serious way, damage him; and yet he also knew that in the end he couldn't care about that, because this was what he had always wanted in his life. As it had been with

Tufa all of that day, he found he could not take his eyes away from her, although he attempted to be casual and even careless with her.

"So *you've come as I said you would come,*" *von Prum said.*

"Not in the way you said," Caterina said.

"No. Not from the snow or the rain or the cold. But you came. That's what is important. None of *them* came."

"None of them had anything to offer you."

"They could have brought me the answer to the secret."

"There is no answer."

Every beautiful woman is beautiful in only her own way, otherwise there would be only one beautiful woman, and this is not so. As is said about the devil, they come in all disguises and in improbable places, and they appear in unexpected ways.

She was, as each of them is, a marvel. To von Prum there was about the Malatesta a quality beyond. That she would come to him as she did betrayed to him an instinct for destruction, a willingness to extend herself to the point of risking her own ruin. That was the thing which excited him beyond all other things; it was the thing beyond the glorious animal that he saw. Every man must have to see beauty in his own way as well.

He made an effort, as he had promised himself, to resist. He told her that he didn't like dark women, women with skin the color of olives, and that his dreams of women were of blond women with full white breasts who understood they were inferior to the men they adored, and who were happy that way.

"What do you have to offer?" he had said when he came back into the room with the glasses and the brandy.

"Myself," Caterina had said.

He allowed the brandy to work in him before he spoke again. There was no embarrassment between them.

"Do you really think that is enough for what I will have to do?" von Prum said.

"Yes, I will be enough for you," Caterina said. "I will be a good mistress for you. You'll see."

He looked away from her, because when he watched her the things he wanted to say were weakened by her.

"You won't regret it," Caterina said. It was said with the simple assurance of a woman who has known since she was very young that some part of her at least belongs in the dream of every man who

has dreamed of possessing a beautiful woman.

"This thing could ruin me," von Prum said. "It could destroy me."

"You won't regret it," Caterina said.

"How do I know that?"

"Because I'll show you."

"Where do you stay?" Caterina asked. He motioned with his head in the direction of his room and she went past him and into the room, where she began to undress. He came to the door and stood by the entrance to the room.

"I want to watch you," he said.

"As you wish," Caterina said. She moved with the assurance of those who are beautiful in their bodies and as if he were not in the room. When she was halfway through undressing she asked for more brandy and she drank.

"As long as we're doing this," she said, "there is no reason why it should be unpleasant."

When he was beside her he began to tremble.

"That won't do," Caterina said. "Why are you trembling?" Because you're what I have wanted all my life," von Prum said, which was the moment of his surrender.

"Then wé understand," the Malatesta said. "It is me for him."

"Yes."

"You won't regret it."

"No, I won't regret it."

"I'll make you a good mistress," Caterina said. "You'll see."

"But I will have to take someone else," von Prum said. "You understand that."

"That isn't what I came for," the Malatesta said.

They lay in the bed, and although the bed was small they didn't touch one another.

"Now what is it you want to do with me?"

"Nothing," the German said. "I want to lie here."

"That won't do either," Caterina said.

"Everthing," von Prum said.

"Then come here."

When dawn came and it was found that Tufa had been freed, there was fear in Santa Vittoria. It could only mean that someone had told about the wine. But when it was found that the wine was safe, the

fear became joy. They learned about the Malatesta and the contract she had made and the people approved of it. It was a very good bargain.

"She can always bring her body back when it's all over," Babbaluche said. "It's more than Tufa would have been able to do."

Some of the women were envious of the Malatesta.

But as the morning wore on, a new consideration occurred to some of the people and the joy died.

"Now it's someone else's turn," Pietrosanto said. "Someone else had to die in Tufa's place." And everyone knew it was true.

By evening the city was in such a state that Bombolini was forced to go across the piazza and ask to speak to Captain von Prum. He was surprised to be invited inside Constanzia's house.

"I'm sorry to have to bother you on this day," Bombolini began, and he was embarrassed. He had almost said on your wedding day. He told the captain about the state of the city.

"If you must have a hostage, and it is a very bad idea," Bombolini said, "the people want you to pick one. Until you do the entire city is condemned. We have been tortured enough."

"And who would you suggest then?" von Prum asked. "Do you have some enemy you might enjoy seeing in front of a firing squad. Do you want the power of picking?"

"Put the names of all the people in a wine barrel and then let the priest draw out the name."

The idea of using the priest had an even stronger appeal to the German.

"You might call it a lottery of death," he said.

They said the words over in their minds. "A lottery of death." There is an excitement to the words.

"Would the priest involve himself in something like this?" von Prum said.

"Oh, yes," the mayor said. "This is God's work now. No matter who puts his hand into the barrel it will be God who chooses the winner."

"I would prefer the priest," the German said. "It's a strange word you use—*winner*. What if you are the winner?"

"No man ever believes he'll be the one to win a lottery."

"And if you are?"

"What could I say then?" he said. "God will have decided He doesn't need my kind of leadership."

Before Bombolini left they drew up the rules for the lottery of death. Women and children would be excluded. The honor of dying would belong to all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, the same ages that the Italian government in the north of Italy had set for the conscription of soldiers.

"When?"

"The drawing must be held tomorrow morning so the people will be able to go to work," Bombolini said.

And so it was agreed.

Before an hour had passed Bombolini had called a meeting of the Grand Council, and they met in Santa Maria of the Burning Oven, going in through the side doors one at a time so as not to attract any attention. They gathered to pick the winner of the lottery.

"I don't like to say this, because I admire you, Bombolini," one of the older men said, "but at a time like this, doesn't honor require that the leader make himself available to his people?"

Bombolini was gratified when the members of the Council voted the idea down before he had to answer. It is not easy to turn down the role of martyr when it is offered to you.

It was surprising, the number of people who the Grand Council felt were qualified to die for the city and the wine, and who they felt would not mind doing it.

"Take Enrico R—," one of them said. "He has no friends, he has no land, he doesn't owe anyone money. He's got no real reason to live. I'm sure if you ask Luigi he would be glad to do this for us."

"You forget," another member of the Council said. "Enrico happens to be married to my sister. She wouldn't let him do it."

They started down the list of names in Padre Polenta's record book, one at a time. When they came to the name of a member of the Grand Council they had the good manners not even to mention it but to go on to the next name. When a name that seemed to be a possible winner came up they would judge him, and some of the things that were said in Santa Maria that night, if they were to be repeated even at this time, would lead to vendettas and more bloodshed than was ever seen in those times. For a time they thought they had found the right man, the perfect winner of the lottery in N.

man to surrender his life for a cause that wasn't his own. In the end, of course, it was the Captain of the People who had to knock and when the door opened had to be the first to go inside. Such is the price of leadership.

Babbaluche was smart. Some think, he was wise, also, and some feel he was never wise. But all agree that Babbaluche was smart—as smart as some of the cocks here who always know when you are coming to get them and manage to die of old age on the roof tops before they see the inside of a pot. The moment the door opened he knew why they had come.

"You've come to tell me something," the cobbler said. "I only hope it's good news."

Bombolini made the error of looking down at his shoes at that moment, and as if the movement were a magnet drawing the others with it, every other head went down. When it came time to look up again—because it would be required to look at the cobbler when posing the final question—the mayor found that he could not bring his head up. So there was a long silence that roared in the dark, dirty little room.

"There is going to be a lottery tomorrow," the mayor managed to mumble.

"And you want me to serve on the committee."

"Even more than that," Pietro Pietrosanto said.

"That sounds flattering," Babbaluche said. And the silence was as deep as before. They could hear Babbaluche's wife breathing in the next room and the stomach of his ass, St. Joseph, whom he kept with him in the house, rumbling.

"It's a strange lottery, eh?" Babbaluche said. His voice was hard and cold and keen. "All the losers are winners and the winner is the loser."

The silence again.

"The big loser," the cobbler said.

"I know what you want," Babbaluche said after that. If the door to the house had opened then, Roberto says, every one of them would have backed out of the cobbler's house and into th[illegible] and not come back. "You want me to pick the name, bec[illegible] the one who has no other reason to protect anyone, I k[illegible] all."

"*Something* like that," Roberto said.

"Or is it the other way around?" Babbaluche said. "There's no reason to protect the cobbler, because they all hate him?"

No one could take his eyes away from the pieces of leather scattered all over the floor. They tried to make shapes and read things in the coils and scraps of leather on the stone floor. If for no other reason than for the words he said next, forgetting all the other things he did for them, the people of the city would have to honor Bombolini.

"Babba," he said, "we have chosen you because we think that *you can do it best.*"

You must someday hear a peacock scream at the dawn to hear the sounds that came from the cobbler's throat. And the screams of defiance and wild joy and bitterness came, not once, but over and over again, until Roberto, for one, was fearful that he himself would begin to scream with the cobbler. It was the finest joke of all his life.

"We know that you are going to die soon, Signor Babbaluche," Roberto said. "We know that and you know it as well. That is why we came to you."

"But why didn't you say that when you came?" the cobbler said to the others. His wife had lit a lamp in the next room, and so there was light in the outer room where we stood. We could hear the woman and her two daughters moaning and crying.

"And that's just it," Babbaluche said to them. "I want to die on my own terms. I want to die my own way. I don't want to give them the satisfaction of killing me."

Roberto didn't know what to say because his mind doesn't work in the right ways for this place, but Bombolini knew what to say after that.

"*But that is just it, Babba,*" *he said. His voice was triumphant* now. "When they kill you, you cheat them. You rob them of what they think they are getting. They demand a life and we give them a corpse."

And the cobbler began to smile, differently than before. Even *though it hurt him, he began to laugh, from the stomach and not* from the throat the way he had done before.

"You make fools of them," *Bombolini said. "At the moment of* your death you're laughing in their faces."

Now everyone was excited. It was the ancient thing here, some-

thing for nothing all over, this time turned inside out.

"You make them do what God would do next week, and they must *pay* for it," Vittorini said. Babbaluche told them to keep God out of this.

"Will you tell them? Will you make sure, before they go, that they know?"

"No," Bombolini said. "Absolutely not. They must carry the shame and guilt of Babbaluche the cobbler around in their minds and in their hearts and rotting their souls until the day comes for them to die."

The cobbler actually tried a little leap in the air. "Italo," he shouted, "you are marvelous. You are so clever." He looked at Roberto. "You are honest, you see, but Italo is clever, and that is always better."

Then he was sad. As bright as he had been, the light had gone from him, and they could all read at once that death was indeed already sitting inside his body, waiting.

"But they'll know," he said. "They'll take one look at me and know."

But Bombolini had thought of that. "We're going to paint your face so you look fresh and healthy. We'll put walnuts in your cheeks to make them bulge. We'll stuff things under your shirt to make you look fat. Your voice is still good."

The cobbler was brightening again. It was amazing to see the way he could come back from the front door of death.

They made the plans for the morning, which was by then not too far away. As few as possible should know, so that when the name was picked from the wine barrel it would come as a surprise and a shock to the people. They decided at first that every name in the barrel should read "Babbaluche," but realized that would be a dangerous thing to do in case any German put his hand into the barrel. It was decided to put all the names into the barrel and to have Padre Polenta hold Babbaluche's name in the sleeve of his cassock.

"But would the priest do such a thing?" Roberto asked. They looked at him as if he were Fungo.

"Have you ever known a priest to lose at cards?" Babbaluche said.

They were going to take his wife and daughters away that night, but Babbaluche was against it.

"They should be in the piazza to faint and fall down and cry,"

he said. "No one can act the way they will act. Then take them away and have three other people take their place. The Germans will never notice."

The others left then, to start making a list of all the names and to set up the wine barrel in the Piazza of the People and to send someone down to paint the cobbler's face.

"Oh, I look forward to this," Babbaluche said. "My last trick on life, my death." The two men smiled at each other.

"Do you know what is even better?" Bombolini said. "Do you know what will happen over this? You will become a martyr. You will become a hero of Italy. The story will go all over Italy—the little cobbler who died for the secret of the wine."

They sat for a time enjoying the wonderful joke. There were many things they might do with it. The cobbler couldn't take wine, but he could hold *grappa* down and he got a bottle and they shared it, drinking for a time in silence. Because they had both had nothing to eat for a long time they got a little drunk very easily.

An hour before the sun came up Rosa Bombolini went down to Babbaluche's house and woke him from his drunken sleep.

"I thought Angela was coming," the cobbler complained. "At least I could have that on my last day."

"You get me," Rosa said.

She rouged his sunken yellow cheeks and darkened his eyebrows and brushed his hair. She used wax from the top of wine kegs to pad out his cheeks and old sweaters under his shirt to hide the bones of his chest and back. When he looked at himself in the mirror he was pleased. He looked something like what he must have looked years before.

He had to lean on her in order to get up to the piazza, and when they arrived almost all of Santa Vittoria was already there, even though it still was dark. All eyes were on the wine barrel. Sergeant Traub was going through the names and he was satisfied that the names of most of the eligible men were in the barrel. He hadn't expected that Bombolini would put in his own, but they didn't want Bombolini dead either.

Padre Polenta came across the piazza and he made the sign of the cross over the people as he came. There was no man who could feel secure. His death was in the barrel. If the Germans found out what

was taking place, a true lottery of death would take place. A young man began to stir the names with a long stick.

"It's out of our hands now," a woman said. "The angel of death is sorting out the names."

They watched the wine-dark barrel as if the man who was to die would come out of it, and not his name alone. They watched it and never took their eyes away from it, and as they watched it grew lighter and lighter, and the moment could not be delayed much longer. When the sun touched the highest tiles and began to slide down the dark wall and turn them bright yellow, Capoferro began to beat a slow march on his drum, a long roll followed by several short taps. Then finally Padre Polenta began a prayer and all the people knelt on the cobblestones and prayed for themselves and then for their brothers and fathers and husbands, and finally for the man who was about to die.

At five o'clock in the morning Sergeant Traub came out of Constanzia's house and began to work his way through the kneeling crowd. The people leaped away from him as if his touch might be the one that signaled their doom.

"Let's get this over with," he said to the priest.

"This is a terrible thing to ask a priest to do," Polenta said.

"I didn't ask you to do it. I'm only a soldier. I carry out orders. I have nothing to do with this at all. My hands are clean." He turned to the priest. "Do you want me to leave it to someone else?"

"No, no," Padre Polenta said. "But it is a terrible thing to do. The choice might be God's, but the blood is yours."

"Pick the name," Traub said. "In the name of God, pick the name."

Capoferro knows what to do in times like these. He should have learned things in the one hundred years he claims to have lived. He rolled the drums again, louder this time, much louder, the old sticks thundering on the rim of the goatskin drum, and then Polenta's arm went up in the air and suddenly dipped down into the barrel like a kingfish going after a fingerling in the Mad River, and while the old man beat the drum the priest swirled his hand around inside the wood. The people strained forward. There was no proof that some mistake had not been made or some trick played. When death is at hand every possibility becomes possible. And then the arm came back out of the barrel—the bird had caught its fish—and the drumming stopped and the priest held up the paper. The silence was

broken by a blast on wild old Capoferro's horn.

The priest looked at the paper as if he could not believe what he read on it or make himself say the words, and he passed it to Bombolini, who in turn passed it along to the sergeant. Sergeant Traub looked at it one way and then the other and he checked the pronunciation of the name with Bombolini and after that came to full attention.

Babbaluche.

It is strange how in a crowd, a mob even, the people always know where to look. The ones around the cobbler turned toward him first, and then all the others turned and then they began to back away from him as if by being close they might be included in his fate or that death might be catching.

"No," Babbaluche cried. "It can't be me. They don't want me. You have read it wrong."

The sergeant handed the paper to someone in the crowd, and it was passed along, from hand to hand, until the cobbler held it in his hand and read his own name. There was a scream—it was his wife—and then there were the cries of his two daughters, and they fell to the stones; they grabbed the sergeant and pleaded with him, they attacked Padre Polenta and demanded that he intercede with Captain von Prum and with God Himself. After that they were taken out of the piazza by force and put away so no one could find them and they could find no one.

It was not a good night for the people of Santa Vittoria. Even though the cobbler was sick he still was going to die and in dying he was doing it for them, because if Babbaluche didn't go one of them would be called. And now that he was going, the people began to know that they were going to miss him. Babbaluche was the salt here.

They came and got him even before the sun had reached down into the piazza. They took the rope off and asked him if he would like to go down in a cart or on a donkey's back, but he told them he would rather limp along.

"I want to beat the drum for you," Capoferro said.

"Ask them," Babbaluche said. "They're in charge of all the killing here."

They allowed the old man to beat his drum.

The Germans were in their parade uniforms. Although *it was*

already warm and soon would be hot, they wore their tunics and steel helmets. At a few minutes after five the procession marched out of the Piazza of the People, the soldiers going ahead, Babbaluche limping along behind them, followed by Bombolini, Vittorini in his uniform, and Capoferro behind them tapping on his goatskin drum.

The way to the rock quarry is down the Corso Cavour and through the Fat Gate and out above the terraces along a saddle of rocky land and cross the saddle to the quarry, where good marble used to be found.

No one planned what happened, but if there is ever another execution here we will do it this way. The people had lined themselves up all the way down the Corso, and as Babbaluche started down they reached out to touch him and say goodbye, to catch his eye or say something for a last time, and he smiled at them and waved back.

When they came through the Fat Gate and started across the saddle, they could see Rana and his deaf-mute father digging the grave that the cobbler would lie in that same day. That part we would do differently. Even for a Babbaluche it must be a strange feeling to see the earth come flying out of a hole and know that in a few hours the same earth will be lying on your face and in your mouth and you will be in there all alone, in the dark wet clay, while all of the rest will be out in the sun at work and making a living.

If one must be shot, the quarry is a good place for it. The stone is in the shape of a horseshoe and they were able to tie the cobbler to the stake they had put up for Tufa and step back from it, and there was room in the pit for all the people to watch and still be safe. Capoferro ceased his drumming and the only sound then was of the last people filing into the rock pit and the crunching of the German's hobnailed boots on the loose shale. Sergeant Traub asked if he wanted a blindfold.

"I'm entitled to all the sun I can get," the cobbler told him. "It warms me and I'm going to need it."

The sergeant stepped forward then and read something to him in German, some official form that turned Babbaluche into some kind of criminal and provided an excuse for the execution. When it had been read he took out a card and read from that in Italian.

"You are here provided one last chance to preserve your life. Answer one question only in return for it. Where is the wine?"

Some felt that they would hear the peacock's cry again, but

Babbaluche made no sound. He began to smile at Traub and he could not stop the smile, and some of the people began to smile also, until the whole city was smiling.

"You have the right to say something," Traub said. He looked at his watch.

"It's all right," Babbaluche said. "You'll be back in time for your breakfast."

He looked out at us because he wanted to say something we might remember, but it must not be easy to think of words that might account for fifty years of life. The soldiers had come to attention in a practice run, and they had leveled their rifles at the cobbler and he began to smile once more.

"Why do you laugh?" Traub said. "This is a serious business."

"The rifles," Babbaluche said. "Those six little black eyes looking for my heart." He looked out at us. "They know," he said, "I don't have one."

Traub looked at his watch again.

"Take the cork clapper off the bell," Babbaluche said. "Give the poor bastards in Scarafaggio back their sound."

None of us recalls Traub giving any verbal order to fire, but the shots were fired and the sound was enormous in that quarry, and then the cobbler was leaning forward against the ropes of the stake. It was done. The smoke rose from the ends of the rifles and we were very silent. It was the silence of many and it was in its manner as enormous as the firing had been and so the sergeant ordered his men to reload at once and they formed a close rank and they turned and started out of the rock pit as fast as they could march without seeming to run from us.

"Long live Babbaluche," Bombolini shouted.

"Long live Babbaluche," the people of the city shouted. The sound shouted back at us from the high stone walls and that too was enormous.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRIUMPH OF SANTA VITTORIA

AFTER that the whole spirit changed. We were the way that Babbaluche had been with Sergeant Traub the morning of his death; there was nothing left that they could do to us. Even if they found the wine, we knew and they understood that we would kill them. It was possible that if they found the wine they would say nothing about it at all.

We no longer saw them or heard them. They lived among us, but they were no longer a part of us. The soldiers spent all of their time in the wine cellar, playing cards among themselves and drinking wine. They were drunk most of the time. A few of the Good Time Boys went down to see them, but these were men who had lost a lot of money and needed to win it back again or face ruin, and so they were allowed to go. The Germans spent all of their time drinking and trying to apologize with their eyes.

It didn't matter. There was nothing they could apologize for. We might have hated them, but, for the time at least, Babbaluche had put an end to that. To hate the Germans would have ruined the joke of his death.

"Oh, it's all right," people would say to the soldiers, the few times people talked to them. "He was only the best cobbler we ever had here. But it doesn't matter. Believe us. It is just as he said. It doesn't matter."

We wouldn't allow them to apologize and that is a terrible thing to do to people.

We almost never saw von Prum after that, and we never saw Caterina at all. She alone of all the Santa Vittorians still suffered from the occupation. She was a prisoner in the house because he loved her, she was all that he had left and because he had vowed that if she left him the last thing that he would do was to see that Tufa died for it, and she knew that this was the one person he was still capable of killing.

"I did some bad things," von Prum said. "See? I know that. But everything I did was for the country."

"What you forget," Caterina told him, "is that every place is someone's country."

"Someday, when this is all over, I'll come back here and I'll do something for the people here. I'll build them a new fountain, I'll help them build a school. Do you think they would like that?"

"Oh yes," Caterina said. "Come back and build them a school." And she was right about that. It's the way we are. We'll take a school from anyone just so they don't try to teach in it.

His plans for returning here some day and doing good works for us occupied his time. There are more notes on that as well. In the course of this he must have scoured his soul and bleached it a bit, because his sense of well-being began to return.

"I have looked into the chaos, I have plumbed the depths," he wrote later. "I have dropped a bucket into the inner well of myself and it begins to come up with clear water. The riddle of my existence is this: That although I have made errors and I admit to them, at the same time I am forced to conclude that, like it or not, in the end I am dedicated to the good life."

After that, he began to go out a bit, a few short walks in the piazza, and he smiled at the women at the fountain and was pleased to find that the smiles were sometimes returned.

"I think they understand," he told Caterina. "These are good people. They know that at the bottom of it all I am only a soldier and that sometimes a soldier is forced to do things that aren't nice but which duty demands be done."

He was happier with himself after that. He felt secure in himself once more. He had done his best, and he was content with most of it. If some people had been harmed, he hadn't wished it to go that way. He was at ease except for the one thing that always came back to haunt him. He was secure enough one afternoon, a day or perhaps two days before the harvest began, to ask Bombolini to come to see him.

"Don't go," everyone told the mayor. "It dishonors us." But he went.

He was surprised to see the Malatesta. Everyone had said that she was wasting away, it was what they wished to believe, but in truth she had never looked better to Bombolini. The hot tubs and the good food and the warm bed had not harmed her. He looked at her and when their eyes met he understood her at once. Why should she waste away because of him? Whose victory would that be? Babbaluche would have approved, Bombolini thought.

"I'm going to do something for you," von Prum said. "I am going to risk my entire professional future for you. We are not going to be the only Germans here, you understand. Sometime soon there will be a general withdrawal from the south and a stand will be made somewhere along a new line here. At that time there may be thousands of soldiers here. It is possible that a major battle could take place and it is possible that then the wine—oh, don't make that face, Bombolini; we aren't children—that the wine will be uncovered. The headquarters of my unit has already withdrawn. Records are in disorder. As commander of Santa Vittoria I am prepared to swear that the wine they find is legitimately your wine, that you have paid your share to the Reich, and the wine must not be touched."

Bombolini thought about the proposal, because there was in truth some merit in it.

"Then you would be the savior of the wine," he said.

"Yes, you can look at it that way. I have no interest in the wine. The wine is nothing to me. You know that. But now I would like to help your people. Give me the opportunity to save your wine for you."

Bombolini had gotten to his feet. He wanted to leave because he was afraid of doing something ridiculous or even dangerous.

"I cannot express how much I appreciate your generosity," he told the captain. "Only an extraordinary man could make such a proposal. It is with a sense of true sadness that I once again must tell you that there is no other wine."

There is *one* moment when it is right to begin to pick the grapes. One day too soon, and the grapes will have been deprived of all the richness that God intended them to receive; a day too late, and a touch of the devil's rot begins. On the right day the last of all the possible moisture has been taken from the air and the soil and the vines and the leaves and sent to the clusters of swollen fruit. The last bit of the sun has been absorbed by the leaves to warm the juice and cause the sugar to bulge against the skins. And when that balance is reached, which is known by men like Old Vines who have roots in the soil and their soul in the vines, the time has come to pick.

In the early days everyone works. Bombolini goes down to the terraces and sweats. Vittorini goes down. This year, for example, Roberto, although his leg pained him, worked with Rosa and Angela

and the Casamassima family from dawn until dark and until he thought sometimes he would die. But he liked the work when it was not too painful. There was something satisfying about picking and holding the heavy clumps of ripe fruit, and he liked working by Angela's side, sweating together in the October sun, walking up the mountain together in the coolness of the evening. Once, next to her in the darkness of the leaves, without thinking about it, he put his hands on her hips and then around her waist and kissed her on the back of the neck, and she didn't turn or pull away or even move.

"You shouldn't do that," she said.

"Why not? I wanted to do it."

"We don't do that here. The boy who does that to the girl means he wants to marry her."

He had said nothing at the time, but later in the day he told her that maybe he would marry her.

"No." She pointed to her bare feet. "Americans don't marry girls with bare feet. Besides, what would I do there? I only know how to pick grapes."

"Do you know how to go to the movies?"

"Yes."

"You could go to the movies. You could sit in the movies all day and play the radio all night."

She thought about it. "No, I wouldn't like that. I like to pick the grapes."

"I was joking with you. They do more than that in America. You think about it."

"I like to pick the grapes. I like it here."

The wine in the first of the barrels stopped boiling on the fifth day after the grapes had been pressed, and that meant that the harvest festival would be earlier than was usual. The nights were cool and heavy with fog, and the sediment in the barrels began to drift to the bottom and the wine to turn clear and cool.

All of the grapes except the ones that would be used for the traditional wine pressing had already been picked.

"Get ready. Prepare yourselves," Old Vines ordered. "I taste the wine in the morning."

It began, the day of the festival, in the darkness of the morning at a few minutes past four o'clock.

It didn't begin in the sense that a day usually begins, by degrees, a little at a time; it began all at once. It erupted; the day exploded on us.

A child ran into the Piazza of the People.

"Here they come," he shouted. "I saw them. They're at the Fat Gate now."

And right after that we heard them coming up the Corso Cavour as if they were trumpeting through a megaphone. The San Marco Penitentiary Thieves and Guards Brass Band. They must have walked the whole dark night through, good men, reliable men who have never let us down, down the mountain from San Marco della Rocca, out through the prison gates, across the valley and up our mountain until there they were, at the Fat Gate, blowing their lungs and hearts out in the last darkness of night, drowning out the children, overcoming the frightened bleating of the sheep and the tunking of ox bells, the sound of the guns we no longer noticed firing to the south, even outcrying the cocks, who had had their morning stolen from them.

"All Hail Garibaldi" at four o'clock in the morning, "Italy Forever" coming up out of the pipe of the street at ten minutes past four, "The March of the Alpini Brigade" near the top of the Corso, and by the time they got to the piazza and began to march into it, "Garibaldi" once more. There were a thousand people there to shout a welcome to them.

Eight men in all, eight in green-and-gold uniforms, eight good musicians, some of the finest thieves and bravest guards in all of Italy, five thieves and three guards, one piccolo, one trombone, one clarinet, two trumpets, cymbals, one bass drum, who would be supported by our own Capoferro, and the leader, the maestro Stompinetti, the Rock of San Marco, who had spent two years in Cleveland, Ohio, and knew all about it.

Bombolini welcomed them to the city of Santa Vittoria.

The Germans were impressive, immaculately uniformed under von Prum. At the church door Vittorini made a salute, and Bombolini welcomed them as guests of honor at the festival.

"As a representative of the German people and the German nation, we are honored to accept," Captain von Prum said.

"Wait until the Resistance gets their hands on this Bombolini," Stompinetti said. "What kind of an Italian is this. Why didn't he

get down in the piazza and kiss his ass while he was about it?"

"Wait," the people around him said. "Just wait. He knows what he's doing."

At the foot of the church steps a large black wooden coffin was placed on two wine barrels.

"The first of our traditions," the mayor said. "It holds the corpse of the old year gone by. We destroy the old year and in that way give birth to the new that lies ahead."

"Very beautiful," von Prum said. "Very symbolic."

"Would you and your men care to act as honor guard?"

"We should be honored."

"The old is dead," Padre Polenta said from the top of the church steps.

"The new," the priest called out—and the dove began to skid down the wire, tied to it upside down by his pink feet—"is born."

The noise is raspy and sometimes the dove cries out, but it made no sound this year. The explosion, however, was as loud and complete as ever. Pieces of the coffin went straight up into the air and others flew out in all directions into the piazza. The smoke was so dense that from the center of the piazza it became impossible to see the front of Santa Maria. When it did clear we could see the Germans, all nine of them, face down on the piazza stones, mingling with ox turds, and several of them, better trained than the others perhaps, with their rifles already in their hands, kneeling and facing the people. There was a great cheer then, an enormous cheer from the people, because this officially opens the *festa.*

Some of the people ran to help the soldiers to their feet, and they tried to brush the manure and the axle grease off their uniforms, but without much success. Bombolini said something to the captain and he smiled and patted him on the back, but nobody was actually able to hear what he said because of the roaring in their ears.

In the center of the piazza, near the fountain, a platform had been built in the night and on it stood the first of the wine barrels, and by the barrel stood Old Vines. He looked then as he always did, as if he were about to be sentenced to his death and he dropped through the platform floor. Padre Polenta said a prayer and then a young girl, all white in her Communion dress, took a copper pitcher and turned the barrel tap and filled the pitcher with wine, and when it was full she handed it to Old Vines. There was no

sound at all in Santa Vittoria then. Even the animals, who exist by the wine as much as we do, seem to know enough to be silent then. He held the pitcher in the air and then he began to pour the new wine into a large crystal wine glass which he then held over his head, the way the priest holds up the chalice before consecrating the sacred Host, and he turned in all four directions.

"It is *vino nero,*" Old Vines called out. "Good and black." There was a roar from the crowd, but not a great one. It was a good sign, but not enough.

Now he lifts the glass to his lips and the people push forward, because they demand not only to see it but to hear the wine washing around in his mouth and being kissed by his tongue and lips, and then he spits it out and no one moves.

They knew it was good. He could not hide the look that began to spread out on his red face. The question now was, How good?

"*Frizzantino,*" the old man shouted. And then there was the roar, the true roar, almost as great as the one that had greeted Bombolini so many months before.

"The wine is alive," he shouted. "It dances." He took more of the wine. This he swallowed.

"The needles on the tongue."

"Give us, give us," the people shouted. They reached up for the wine glass but he didn't give it to them then.

"It's as fresh as the air," he shouted. "It tastes like the sun in the sky." He had never spoken this way of the wine before. He told them that the wine was fat but at the same time light, that it was fruity and yet not sweet, and that the bouquet was strong enough to drown the brain.

"It is a good wine," he said. The first of the desirable categories.

"It is a great wine." The cheering grew louder. They waited for the third category that is almost never awarded.

"It is a wine too good for men to drink," Old Vines told them. He was holding the glass up to the gods that only he recognized.

"We have grown a wine fit for the saints."

As we do, the oldest of each family comes forward with a pitcher and the pitcher is filled at the barrel and the wine is taken back to the family and sipped and tasted and then drunk by all, from the oldest down to the youngest. When all the families had tried the wine the San Marco Brass Band broke into some gay song from the

mountains to the south of here, and the time for reverence was past, and the uproar began in the piazza.

"Now comes a real treat," Bombolini shouted into von Prum's ear. "No outsiders have ever done this before. You are going to be allowed to help carry the statue of Santa Maria."

Teams of men carry the statue and it is considered an honor to be chosen. There are eight men to a team and each year three teams are chosen. With Polenta in the lead, the statue is carried around the Piazza of the People and then down the Corso Cavour through the Fat Gate and across the terraces. As he goes the priest blesses the doorways and the windows and on the terraces he blesses the last of the grapes of this harvest and the roots of the vines for the harvest to come.

It is not a heavy statue, but the distance is long, and when the day is hot it can prove to be work fit only for the strong. To many, carrying the statue is a kind of penance. It was as if they were saying to God, "I sweat for you, You sweat for me."

The statue was hollow, whether by design or by deceit has never been known.

The first team carried the statue all the way down the Corso Cavour, and the people came out and pinned lire to the statue, and those who had no money left food in her arms and put things in the cart that came along behind.

At the Fat Gate a second team took over the statue and it went down to the terraces. Most of the men were older men, some as old as sixty, but they held the statue high and went down the mountain and through the grapes at a good pace. Young girls were picking the last of the grapes and the German soldiers, getting into the spirit of things, helped them fill the baskets.

"You had better take it easy," Pietrosanto warned them. "You're going to be next with the statue."

"If those old men can carry it, we can carry it," Heinsick told him.

"They know how to do it. It's harder than it looks," Bombolini said. "They've done this for years."

"With one hand," one of the soldiers said. "One hand."

"I don't know," Pietrosanto said. Heinsick called Zopf over and told him to roll up his shirt sleeve. He had an arm the thickness of a man's leg. "One of your Bavarian oxes," the corporal said proudly.

Heinsick himself was built like a bull.

In the center of the terraces the statue was set down on the cart to rest and the men and women and the soldiers walked across through the vineyards for the blessing of the vines. When the prayers were done and they came back, Bombolini asked Captain von Prum if his men were ready to accept the honor of carrying the statue.

"We have been looking forward to it," von Prum said, and the people applauded.

They lifted it up easily and put it on their shoulders and they started back up through the terraces at a good pace. It is traditional after the prayers for the people to sing their way back up to the town and the band plays, following along behind, because the sacred time is over and the wine waits in the piazza and the pressing of the last grapes will begin, and greased-pole climb still lies ahead.

The Germans were good about it at first. The people here can't keep step, but the soldiers never lost a beat. Sergeant Traub counted the cadence even though he was one of the men under the statue.

"One two three four, one two three four"—in German, loud and clear and strong.

"You had better save your breath," Bombolini warned him, but the sergeant smiled and kept on shouting. It went very well then for at least a hundred steps, but after that Traub ceased to count and then the steps slowed a little and the band, to keep in time, had to play a little slower and the people had to sing a little slower, so after fifty more paces they ceased playing "Garibaldi" and began to play the "Lament for Sardinia," a sad slow song about some thieves who starved to death in the mountains there. Soon some of the people, even older men, impatient to get up to the piazza, began to go past the men carrying the statue and the men carrying it began to fall back.

"What's the matter with you?" von Prum called to them. "Keep it moving. Pick up the step."

For a short time after that, through a strong show of effort, they were able to pick up the step and Traub began to count again, in a small voice. But then it seemed to be too much for them once more and the step slowed and finally, still a long way from the Fat Gate, it ceased to be what could be called a step or a march at all but became a kind of clump, the way a tired man on a steep mountain puts down his feet, one after the other, with great deliberation.

"The first man to drop out receives a summary court martial," von Prum said, in a low voice that only his men were meant to hear.

It is a true thing that if the desire to live were enough, no man, for example, would ever drown. But there comes a time when the body can no longer do even what it deeply desires. The Germans' legs were quivering and it was only a matter of a few more steps before at least one of the sixteen legs would quiver too much and go under, which is what happened. The result was the same as missing a stroke with the oar of a boat. For one moment they stopped and teetered, they started to go back and held themselves and they ran forward a step or two, and there was a second at least when they came within a foot of the edge of the cart track and plunging down into the terraces with Santa Maria on their backs.

"The sacred statue," Bombolini shouted. "In the name of God. hold it."

The old women began to cry out. They shouted to the Mother of God to reach down and save Santa Maria, for Santa Maria to save herself, and in the end the Germans held, although the veins were sticking out on their foreheads and their eyes were bulging.

No one could say why they stopped. It is said that in a war no one can say why an attack stops. Each soldier has his own reason and his own limit, but all at once the attack stops. It was that way with the burden of Santa Vittoria.

"*Step,*" the captain called out, and no one took a step. They stood where they were, and the statue shook with the effort simply to keep it from falling.

Six young men then—it was important to Bombolini that there were six and not eight—eased the poles off the Germans' shoulders and not one of them made a protest, not even Captain von Prum, and they slung the statue on their shoulders and started up toward the Fat Gate at a fast pace and even managed to break into a trot. Stompinetti saw them coming, and he broke into a Neapolitan quick step, and they went the rest of the way up to the Fat Gate as if they were going home for their soup.

The Germans fell where they had stood. They sprawled out in the white dust of the cart track and stared up at the sky, unable to move, or curled up in the dust to stop the shaking of their muscles.

When the statue of Santa Maria, which had been carried by nine or ten different groups by then, was being placed up on the platform

on which Old Vines had first tasted the wine that morning. And when they were sure that none of the Germans had managed to recover and come back inside the Fat Gate, they took out the great boulder that had been put in the saint's belly and dropped it in a cart and took it away so that it would never be seen again. After that they carried Santa Maria back into the dimness of the church and put her back up on her dark dim pedestal, where Polenta began to strip her of the grapes and the vines and the lire that had honored her. She had served her people well.

For the Germans the day seemed to have ended, but the festival was only beginning. There was the noon meal of cold cooked beans and raw onions spread on fresh bread and drowned in olive oil and then there was the new wine washing it down, buckets and glasses and pitchers and bottles and jugs of wine, and everyone went around shouting "*frizzantino* . . . yes, it is true, it is really truly *frizzantino*," as if the word had just been invented, until it became boring to hear, beautiful as the word is.

After lunch the people slept, except for those who still had business to do. Longo and a crew of men were converting the Fountain of the Pissing Turtle so that it would run with wine that evening and Marotta and his son were preparing the fireworks display.

At four o'clock the fountain began to run with wine and when the men cheered, the people began to wake up and come back into the piazza. The wine arched out above their heads, sparkling in the afternoon sunlight, and fell back into the barrel from which it had been pumped, foaming and bubbling and leaping with life. When the first of the Germans, Captain von Prum and Sergeant Traub, came back up into the Piazza of the People the fountain was already flowing with wine, the band was ready to play again and Lorenzo the Magnificent Wine Presser was standing knee deep in our grapes. It was a little after four o'clock when Marotta received the signal from Old Vines and fired a Roman candle out over the people's heads. As the little colored balls of flame began to hit the walls and drop among them, Stompinetti broke into the "Wine Presser's Song" and the festa was underway once more.

It is a strange song, a slow dance, since wine pressing is hard and heavy work. It seems very ancient and as if it had come from some other part of the world, because we have no other song like it. The

trampling of the grapes must be done in a slow rhythm, in a swaying movement that goes back and forth and side to side more than up and down.

He began the dance as he always did, with his own woman, a Gypsy who looks as if she had spent one life already as a wolf, and when she was tired and he was through with her, he began to point at people in the crowd and they would come up and get into the barrel and begin to dance with Lorenzo. There is no turning away when you are summoned to the press. It would insult the wine and it would insult Lorenzo, neither of whom must be insulted. Anything is allowed to Lorenzo. The women hold up their skirts and show their legs and even their thighs, and Lorenzo holds them by the hands and by the arms and around their waists. If the legs are good, strong and firm and brown and muscled, the men cheer the legs and the women shout suggestive things that any other time of the year would not be allowed.

All women are lost to Lorenzo the minute the music begins. Every woman knows this and Lorenzo knows it and all of the men in Santa Vittoria know it. He dances with a woman until she yields to him, until she surrenders herself completely and he can move her to the left or right or in any way he wishes her to go, by a flicker of the eye, a breath, the touch of a finger. She belongs to Lorenzo then, and when she does he discards her.

The same goes for the men. It is a challenge with the men, and he never loses. He dances not until the man surrenders, but until the man can go on no longer. Woman after woman danced with Lorenzo, all succumbing totally to the spirit of the dance and his powers. Angela. Caterina Malatesta. Both Roberto and von Prum were furious with jealousy. As Caterina returned to Constanzia's house, she knew that Tufa would be waiting for her in Constanzia's house when she went back to it. He was behind the door, in the darkness of the room, when she entered it. Even in the darkness she could see the wildness of his eyes. They were as wild as those of Lorenzo, but these were wild with loss and so were more dangerous.

"If you're going to do something to me I want you to do it at once, without talking," Caterina said to him. She could see that he held a knife in his hand.

"And so you gave yourself to him, too," Tufa said. "In front of the entire city."

"All women give themselves to Lorenzo. I'm no different."

"If he had asked you would have taken off your dress and lain with him in the grapes."

She said nothing.

"Admit it," he said. "Admit that."

"Yes, of course," Caterina said. "You know how I am."

He crossed the room and stood at the entrance to the small bedroom.

"And this is where you sleep with him," Tufa said. His voice held anger and disgust.

"What do you want to do with me?" Caterina asked. "What do you need from me?"

There was laughter coming from the piazza, and she knew they were laughing at the captain. Tufa had gone into the room and he was prodding the bed with the toe of his shoe.

"So this is where you curl up with the German? What do you say to him?" He came back toward her. "Maybe sometimes you forget and call him Carlo, eh? Do you ever do that?"

She had turned away. She realized that she was bored, not by him, but by the necessity of going through with whatever it was Tufa would have to go through.

"Don't go away from me," Tufa said. He had meant it as an order, but it had come from his mouth as a plea.

"Do what you have to do, Carlo. If you have to use the knife, use the knife, but in the name of God, do it."

It angered him.

"You're so Goddamn brave. You're so above us," Tufa said. "Do you know what they do here when a woman dishonors her man? Do you know what they do with their knives?"

She turned back toward Tufa. "They cut them here," she said. "So they can't dishonor again."

"Yes, there," Tufa said. "It's very ugly and very effective."

She decided to try.

"I didn't dishonor you," Caterina said. "I came here because I honor your life."

She told him, because she was bored and because she didn't care what became of herself any longer, that he was the same as the German, that they were the same men, that he didn't have the dignity of the fat mayor or the courage of the young boy Fabio.

"When all of this was over I wouldn't have come back," Caterina said.

"You would have come back," Tufa said. He was nodding his head, over and over again, and she knew he was dangerous, and although she didn't care she also experienced fear. "But I wouldn't have had you. I would have done this," Tufa shouted. The shout would have been heard in the piazza but for the music, which was loud and fast then, and the laughter of the people watching the German being dishonored in the wine press. The knife entered her stomach. The pain was not as bad as she had thought it would be, and the feeling she felt above all others was relief that it was over. She knew also that she would live.

All of Tufa's anger was gone. He pointed to the wound.

"Every man you give yourself to will know why that was done," Tufa said. "They'll hate you for it."

"No, some man will love me for it," the Malatesta said.

On the floor was a leather suitcase which had belonged to Caterina and in which Tufa had put some of his things. All of his rage was gone.

"I'm sorry I had to do that, but it was something that had to be done," Tufa said.

"I understand," Caterina said. "Don't apologize to me." There was a great deal of blood from the wound, but she was unwilling to tend to it until he was gone.

"I have my honor back," Tufa said. He had picked up the suitcase. The people were making a great deal of noise, and it would be a good time for him to go. "You were brave but I have my honor back."

In the meantime, Lorenzo had taken von Prum into the dance They danced until the German dropped, almost drowning in the wine. The people then threw him from the press. His head hit the cobblestones hard, and he was carried limply to Constanzia's house.

The dancing ended at two o'clock in the morning and the Germans came at five. These were, as Pietrosanto said, the real Germans, hard, bearded men who were fighting and running for their lives. The soldiers were men from the Hermann Goering Parachute Division and they came through the Fat Gate and up the Corso Cavour in little half-tracks whose treads crushed the tops of our cobblestones into powder. They never looked at us. They moved through us with

the assurance of men who knew that if so much as one shot was fired at them by some Resistance fighter, they would burn the town to the ground. They asked what German was in command and where he was.

The officer was led across the piazza and they pointed to Constanzia's house. What happened after that was unfair to Captain von Prum. They found him in bed with Caterina Malatesta, since she had felt too weak to go to her own home and she was also afraid of what childish act he might commit if she left him then. They pulled him out of the bed, his hair mottled with wine and blood, his body dyed in it. He was too stunned and too sick from the fall he had taken the night before to protect himself.

"This is the shit we leave behind to run things while we fight," the parachute officer said. We could hear it in the piazza. He slapped Captain von Prum in the face and there was nothing the captain could do but stand in the room and look at the floor. It must have been very painful.

"Where are the rest of your men?"

"I don't know," von Prum said.

The officer looked at the other officers with him.

"He doesn't know."

He seized von Prum by the nose and he pulled his head to the left and right. "He doesn't know," he said. "He doesn't know." He stepped away and he kicked von Prum in the testicles, and the captain went down to the floor.

"This is the kind of scum who is destroying us," he said. They left then, and within ten minutes all of them were in the Corso Cavour and going back down the mountain.

We were helpful to the ones that were left. We were glad to help them. The women gave them cups of hot tea made from field herbs and grass, and the men gave them *grappa* to get the blood going again.

After von Prum had joined the departing Germans, Fabio ran to catch him at the Fat Wall. He told him, "Ten years from now, if you are alive, you will wake up in the night and you will start going over the city again, house by house and street by street, trying to pick up the church and look under it, and it will begin to drive you mad. Where did you fail? you will ask yourself. How did they fool you? And you will know only one thing for certain."

Fabio paused to be sure that von Prum was hearing him.

"What?" Traub said. "Certain of what?"

"That we are laughing at you. That we were laughing at you when you came and we always laughed at you and that we will always *laugh at you.*"